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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides resource materials for the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, a weekend of worship, education, outreach, and advocacy that proclaims and responds to a faith-based call to meet the needs of children. The theme of 1999's Children's Sabbath focuses on getting all children ready to learn and succeed. The booklet's sections are: (1) "Welcome to the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths," which provides background information on the movement; (2) "Messages and Endorsements," including letters from Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund; Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell; Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, OSB; Rabbi Eric Yoffie; and a list of organizations endorsing the Children's Sabbath; (3) "Planning and Promoting Your Children's Sabbath," including a planning guide, media release, bulletin insert, and clip art; (4) "Christian Worship and Education Resources," including liturgies, sermon resources, and lesson plans; (5) "Jewish Shabbat and Education Resources," including an Erev Shabbat service, a sample sermon, and lesson plans; (6) "Interfaith Worship Resources," including liturgical suggestions and resources for interfaith children's sabbaths; (7) "Activity Ideas for All Faiths"; and (8) "Follow Up Actions and Resources for All Faiths," including an evaluation form. (EV)

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NATIONAL OBSERVANCE OF CHILDREN'S SABBATHS

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Worship, educational, community outreach, and advocacy resources for Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and other faith traditions

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Wonderfully Made

Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

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About CDF

The mission of the Children's Defense Fund is to *Leave No Child Behind*® and to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start*, and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investment before they get sick or into trouble, drop out of school, or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundations, corporation grants, and individual donations. We have never taken government funds.

NATIONAL OBSERVANCE OF CHILDREN'S SABBATHS

Wonderfully Made

Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed

Worship, educational, community outreach, and advocacy resources for Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and other faith traditions

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

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Welcome to the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths

This year marks the eighth annual celebration of the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, a weekend of worship, education, outreach, and advocacy that proclaims and responds to the faith-based call to meet the needs of children.

If this is your first time participating in the Children's Sabbath, we are delighted that you are joining in this nationwide movement and trust that you will find it an inspiring and energizing occasion for your congregation. If you are a long-time Children's Sabbath participant, we are grateful for your continued witness on behalf of children. Your participation has enriched and strengthened the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, and will continue to do so.

What is the Children's Sabbath?
The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is an opportunity for people of all ages and all faiths to learn more about the urgent needs of children and the mandate in every faith tradition to nurture and protect children. Through worship services, religious education classes, congregational outreach and advocacy activities, people of faith learn more about the problems facing children and commit themselves to respond. The goal of the Children's Sabbath is to generate new, long-term efforts to meet children's needs by raising awareness and engaging in advocacy to increase congregational efforts to help children.

The Children's Sabbath begins across the nation on Friday night with services in synagogues and mosques and continues through Sunday with church and interfaith worship services. Most Children's Sabbaths are held by individual congregations, although in a growing number of communities congregations unite for ecumenical and interfaith celebrations of the Children's Sabbaths.

The Children's Sabbath is an intergenerational event that engages people of all ages in the planning, participation, and follow-up activities. In this respect, it is different from a traditional "Youth Sunday" that is entirely planned and led by the young people. The focus on serious problems facing children and needed responses also sets it apart from traditional Children's Days.

What is the 1999 Children's Sabbath theme?
The 1999 Children's Sabbath focuses on getting all children ready to learn and succeed. This means providing quality early learning experiences at home or in child care, Head Start, or preschool settings; ensuring that every school helps all children learn and achieve; and preparing young people for success in work and in life. The 1999 Children's Sabbath also addresses the obstacles that hinder children's school readiness to learn, including poverty, poor nutrition, lack of health care, lack of quality child care and early learning experiences, violence, and lack of encouragement and adult support. Although each year the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths has a suggested theme, we hope you will shape that theme to reflect the special concerns of children in your community and congregation.

When is the Children's Sabbath held?
The Children's Sabbath, designated for the third weekend of October, falls on October 15-17, 1999. However, if your congregation is unable to celebrate it on this date, select an alternate one. What's most important is devoting a time to highlight the needs of children and our responsibility to respond.

Why does the Children's Defense Fund sponsor the Children's Sabbath?
From its inception, CDF has recognized the importance of the faith community's partnership in building a movement to *Leave No Child Behind*®. A nation that lets its children be the poorest citizens has at its heart a spiritual and ethical crisis. Thus, the religious community must help to transform our nation's priorities so that we defend those who are youngest, weakest, poorest, and most vulnerable. For many years CDF worked to support denominations and religious organizations as they developed child advocacy initiatives and campaigns. Then, the time was ripe to launch a weekend that would coalesce these efforts into a united moral witness for children that crosses all lines of geography, faith tradition, race, and ethnicity.

Who supports the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths?
The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is endorsed by more than 200 denominations, faith groups, and religious organizations, and is guided by an Advisory Committee of Jewish, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and interfaith leaders. If you are interested in having your organization become an official endorser of the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, please call CDF's Religious Affairs Division at (202) 662-3589.

How can I get involved?
Obtaining this Children's Sabbath manual is the first important step to getting involved in the National Observance! The next steps are outlined in Section 3: Planning and Promoting Your Children's Sabbath on pages 15–26. One of the first decisions you and those who join you in the planning will need to make is whether to plan a Children's Sabbath just for your congregation, or to join with congregations of other faiths or denominations to plan an ecumenical or interfaith Children's Sabbath. (See pages 105–119 for planning an interfaith service.) Either option is a valuable way to participate. You should determine what is right for your congregation this year.

What's in this manual and how do I use it?
This manual provides planning suggestions, promotion ideas, worship resources, educational programs for all ages, activity ideas, and suggestions for building on your Children's Sabbath to help children throughout the year.

The resources are designed to be easy to use "as is," or they can be adapted to suit your particular congregation. Feel free to use as much or as little as is right for your congregation. Some congregations "put a toe in the water," start small in the first year and build their celebration in subsequent years; others jump in with both feet right from the start.

We have once again provided a single manual with resources for Catholic, Episcopal, Jewish, and Protestant congregations, as well as for interfaith celebrations involving many more faith traditions. We hope that you will find the resources for your particular tradition helpful and the other resources enriching.

How have other congregations celebrated the Children's Sabbath?
The Children's Sabbath at St. Margaret Mary Parish in Naperville, IL, was supported by the bishop in the Diocese of Joliet. Parish members used their Children's Sabbath to urge the state's newly elected governor to keep his campaign promises regarding child care. They also held an Information Fair in the parish center. It featured a range of organizations including a parent resource center, a state child advocacy group, family shelter services, a YMCA child care placement center, the county health department, and a Catholic school. At the fair, adults wrote postcards to the governor, and children drew pictures.

Cornwall United Methodist Church in Cornwall, NY, held two worship services, led by laity, to celebrate children and promote awareness of the unmet needs of children. Children's artwork was displayed, and youths served as ushers, greeters, and scripture readers. They announced the Sunday School's mission project for the year. As a follow-up to its Children's Sabbath, the church is becoming involved in the United Methodist Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty. It is providing homework help in an after-school program, and hosting children's services. It has pledged to increase the involvement of children and pay more attention to their needs.

Trinity Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara, CA, focused its liturgy and education program on children for the Children's Sabbath. The Children's Sabbath liturgy included special prayers, a sermon, and hymns. To help people of all ages learn more about children's needs and opportunities for response, the church conducted a special children's project for its

church school and held an adult forum on "Children and Teens at Risk."

B'nai Sholom Congregation in Huntington, WV, held a special Friday night service and also included special lessons for children in its Religious School. Through these and other educational efforts, it is raising the awareness of adults in the congregation and the community.

Does the impact of the Children's Sabbath last beyond the weekend itself?

Absolutely! An important goal of the Children's Sabbath is to generate new long-term efforts to improve the lives of children. Congregations do that in a variety of ways.

Jason Lee United Methodist Church in Salem, OR, invited a co-director of the Oregon Health Action Campaign to speak at its 1998 Children's Sabbath service, which involved children in the leadership. As a result of its Children's Sabbath, the church has undertaken a new project focusing on children's health and oral hygiene. Church members distribute toothbrushes during foodbank hours on weekdays.

As a result of the 1998 Children's Sabbath at Kingman United Methodist Church in Kingman, KS, the church formed a task force of school and church members to look at children's needs in the community and develop programs in response.

After their 1998 Children's Sabbath, members of Chesterfield Christian Church in Chesterfield, IN, began talking about opening a child care and after-school program in their facility.

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MESSAGES AND ENDORSEMENTS

A Letter from Marian Wright Edelman, CDF President and Founder

Dear Faithful Friend of Children:

At a park just a dozen blocks from the Children's Defense Fund stands a statue of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune. She was an African American educator and leader who was born in 1875 to former slaves and died in 1955 as a revered national figure. The base of the statue is inscribed with the legacy Dr. Bethune sought to leave the generations that would come after her: *"I leave you love. I leave you hope. I leave you the challenge of developing confidence in one another. I leave you a thirst for education. I leave you a respect for the use of power. I leave you faith. I leave you racial dignity. I leave you also a desire to live harmoniously with your fellow man. And I leave you finally a responsibility to our young people."*

Children play around and on the statue. Mothers push babies in strollers, while a father holds the hand of his young daughter in one hand and the leash of his dog in the other. Toddlers wobble on unsteady feet and ten-year-olds race each other on bicycles. Teens saunter by, some with backpacks full of school books. The children are white, African American, Latino, and Asian American. They come from families enjoying great affluence and families mired in deep poverty. There are single parents and married parents, foster parents and those whose children are adopted. With the dome of the U.S. Capitol in view, you feel as if you are seeing a representative cross-section of our nation.

As is true across our nation, some of these children are richly blessed with the legacy Dr. Bethune sought to leave, while others are denied this inheritance. Without it, they will be unable to pass it on to their children and their children's children.

The 1999 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, *Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed*, celebrates the priceless legacy we can and must give to all children so that they can learn, succeed, flourish, and realize their God-given potential. Through prayer, song, religious education classes, hands-on service, and advocacy, congregations will learn more about the challenges facing children and renew their commitment to children. Through the Children's Sabbath, congregations will begin to pass on to our children the gifts Dr. Bethune promised.

"I leave you love. I leave you hope. I leave you the challenge of developing confidence in one another." It is hard for children to feel loved and hopeful when poverty, violence, poor education, and lack of health care threaten their ability to learn and succeed. More than 14 million children are living in poverty. Today, millions lack health insurance, and are in unsafe and uncaring environments. When children are denied basic necessities and struggle simply to survive, it is difficult to develop confidence or trust in the world or to learn in school.

On the Children's Sabbath, many children will receive your gift of love as they see, hear, and feel that their parents, congregations, and God love them deeply. They will receive the gift of hope that congregations are working to ensure that strong early learning experiences and good schools give all children a future bright with promise. They will gain confidence in others, as congregations demonstrate their shared commitment to children, and the powerful things that can happen when we work together faithfully toward a common vision.

"I leave you a thirst for education." Too few children have their thirst for education satisfied. Rich early learning experiences are critical to putting children on the path to success in school and in work. Yet the enormous potential and bright promise of these early years is squandered in countless children. Millions of employed parents can not find safe, affordable, quality child care for their children while they work. Millions of eligible low income and disabled children are denied the services and stimulation of the Head Start program. Countless parents don't know the importance of reading to their children, and other ways of stimulating early learning at home.

Older children need stimulating learning experiences in school and after school to satisfy their thirst for knowledge. Every child should be expected to perform at high levels and deserves the right supports and expectations to help him or her do so, both in and out of school. Far too many children, however, feel hopeless. They lower their expectations to meet the low expectations of adults who teach them, and as they attend substandard schools that lack such basics as enough textbooks.

On the Children's Sabbath, you can help children receive the gift of a thirst for education. The Children's Sabbath will celebrate the importance of learning, and our commitment to providing high-quality learning experiences for preschoolers, children, and youths at home, in child care and Head Start programs, in school and after school, and in our places of worship. Great attention must be paid to the program content and to the training of those providing these programs. CDF has carefully prepared reading lists, summer and after-school programs, training, and curriculum guides to ensure high quality for such programs.

"I leave you a respect for the use of power. I leave you faith. I leave you racial dignity. I leave you also a desire to live harmoniously with your fellow man." For so many children, power seems far off, and often abused and used against them. Faith can seem irrelevant and confined to weekend worship, and neither seems to be a force for justice in their lives. Racial indignities and isolation abound as *de facto* segregation separates children in their schools, places of worship, and neighborhoods, and the idea of living together peacefully seems unrealizable.

On the Children's Sabbath, children will receive the gift of a respect for the use of power, and will feel empowered. Speaking out for children—in our congregations, communities, legislators' offices, and through the media—is a vital component of the Children's Sabbath, as we work to harness power for justice and the protection of children. On the Children's Sabbath, children and adults alike may receive the gift of renewed faith as congregations put their faith into action, and are inspired in new ways to act to give children a fair start. The Children's Sabbath will give the gift of racial dignity, as many congregations unite across lines of race, ethnicity, income, and religious tradition, and embody respect for each person. It can be a transformative gift and experience to pray, learn, and act with others in harmony toward a common vision.

"And I leave you finally a responsibility to our young people." Perhaps worst of all, too many children and young people feel abandoned by adults to the forces that threaten their ability to learn and succeed. They look for stimulation in their earliest years and instead are plunked down in front of the television. They know education is the door to their future but are locked into failing schools. They want to be positively engaged but often lack adult supervision outside school, and drift into risky and damaging behaviors after school hours and during idle summer months. In short, they often don't feel protected or consistently engaged by adults.

The Children's Sabbath affirms the faith mandate in every great religious tradition to protect, nurture, and care for children. On the Children's Sabbath, your congregation will embrace and renew its responsibility to the young people of your congregation, your community, and our nation.

The motto of the school founded by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune was "enter to learn, depart to serve." My prayer is that on the Children's Sabbath, people of faith will enter to learn more about the challenges facing children, and that they will depart to serve children in new ways that ensure that all children may learn and succeed. I am grateful that you are joining in the 1999 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths to answer God's call to help all of our children, so wonderfully made, to learn and succeed. Together, we can give all children a priceless legacy that they can in turn give to their own children, and their children's children.

In faith,

Marian Wright Edelman

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National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

Office of the
General Secretary

Dear Friends:

I am delighted to write to you today to tell you how important I believe the Children's Sabbath Observance is to all of us. I am pleased on behalf of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA to endorse the 1999 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths. From its inception in 1992, the 35 member Communions of the National Council of Churches of Christ have been supporters of this important and timely effort.

At every opportunity that we have, we will encourage the nearly 150,000 congregations of our member communions to embrace the Children's Sabbath Observance. The theme "Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed" will resound as an urgent message in many of our communities. Preparation of our children for success will always require nurture and mentoring, love and affection and instilling a sense of self-worth and self-respect. But, we kid ourselves if we fail to realize the important role of adequate health care, nutrition, housing and education.

The church has always held "equipping the saints" to be at the heart of its purposes. As Christians we live under a Gospel mandate to do all that we can to enable children to live the lives for which they were created. In today's world it takes all of us—home, church, school, community—to bring our children to young adulthood safe, confident, kind and committed. The Sabbath Observance materials not only call congregations to this ministry, but equip them effectively to carry it out.

We, at the National Council of Churches, remain grateful to the Children's Defense Fund for its exemplary ministry and mission in advocating for children and their families. This is a resource for ministry that no congregation can afford to be without!

Grace and Peace,

Joan Brown Campbell

The Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell
General Secretary

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ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Dear Friend:

Jesus had a special love for children. So must we. But such love must be shown by our actions. One of those actions is making sure that children can grow up to be the kind of full persons God would want them to be. For this to happen they have to have the opportunities to grow in every way—socially, intellectually, spiritually and physically.

Years ago, I had the opportunity in a South American country to visit a small school in a rural area. When I naively asked the third graders what they wanted to be when they grew up, I expected the usual enthusiastic responses I had met with in schools I have visited in the United States: a nurse, a secretary, a fireman, an astronaut, a doctor, or a baseball player. Instead, I got blank faces. The teacher explained to me that the children could not imagine such things; their only concern was to find enough food to get through each day.

Later I found out that there are many children like that in our very midst. You and I know that we must do better. We must let children dream dreams. That means that schools, child care centers, and after school programs—all of these must be provided by those who care, who love, who support, who animate, who develop the talents of our children. Not to develop all that potential would be a loss for church and society. Helping our children to develop their full potential and to become the adults that God intends them to be—that is our task as Catholic parishes who put children first.

The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is an important opportunity for parishes to raise up the blessings of our children and join in solidarity with people of various faith traditions nationwide, as together we pray, educate, serve, and advocate on behalf of their needs.

Blessings on all of you who make sacrifices for children, especially to see that they have good child care. We can do nothing less if we claim to be followers of Christ.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

+Rembert G. Weakland

Most Reverend Rembert G. Weakland, O.S.B.
Archbishop of Milwaukee

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איחוד ליהדות מתקדמת באמריקה

RABBI ERIC H. YOFFIE, PRESIDENT

Dear Friend,

I am writing today to urge you to take part in the 1999 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths on the weekend of October 15-17, 1999. Each year, the Children's Defense Fund puts together a packet of material that includes a Friday night service, sermon material, and educational material. The focus for this year's packet is *Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed*.

Joining with other congregations, Jewish and non-Jewish, in your own community and throughout the nation to celebrate the Children's Sabbath is a powerful experience and can serve as a catalyst for activating your congregation on these issues. Our many colleagues who annually celebrate the Children's Sabbath can tell you from personal experience the profound impact that participation can have for your community and how helpful the materials can be to you.

As Rabbi Jonathan Biatch from Beth El Hebrew Congregation in Alexandria, Virginia said, "It has contained a lot of inspiring readings and truly aided me to promote the cause of children within a worship context." Other congregations such as Temple Kol Ami in Thornhill, Ontario, have used the program to become more active advocates for children's issues. According to Rabbi Daniel Komito Gottlieb, The Children's Sabbath "provided an opportunity for us to invite our federal government representative to address the congregation on the government policy and plans to alleviate child poverty."

We learn in Proverbs, "Teach your offspring in the way the child ought to go; the child will not swerve from it even in old age." (Proverbs 22:6) Today we understand that a child's ability to succeed in school depends on so many things—quality teachers, a strong home, adequate health care, and a full stomach. To help our children get the best education they can, we must work to make sure that they have all the necessary tools.

By providing resources for prayer, education and advocacy, the 1999 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths can serve as an important catalyst in moving towards these goals. I hope you will join with us and take part in this important event.

Sincerely,

Eric H Yoffie

Eric H. Yoffie

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Catholic Diocese of Covington, Family Ministry Office

Catholic Diocese of Savannah, Office of Black Ministry

Catholic Diocese of Youngstown

Center for Ethics and Economic Policy

Center for Ministry Development

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence

Central Maryland Ecumenical Council

Christian Children's Fund

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Christian Communication Council of Metropolitan Detroit Churches

Christian Conference of Connecticut

Christian Council of Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland

Christian Council of Metropolitan Atlanta

Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Church Council of Greater Seattle

Church of Christ in Yale

Church of the Brethren

Church of the Brethren, Atlantic Northeast District

Church Women United

Church Women United in Pennsylvania

Churches United of the Quad City Area

Colorado Council of Churches

Community Ministries of Rockville

Congregations Concerned for Children, Child Advocacy Network

Congregations Concerned for Children of the St. Paul Area Council of Churches

Congress of National Black Churches

Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries

Council of Christian Communions

Council of Churches and Synagogues of Lower Fairfield County

Council of Churches, the City of New York

Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport

Council of Churches of Santa Clara County

Covenant to Care, Inc.

Cross-Lines Cooperative Council

Des Moines Area Religious Council

Dominican Sisters of Edmonds, Wash.

Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, Calif.

Downtown Cooperative Ministry, New Haven, Conn.

East Harlem Interfaith, Inc.

Ecclesia: The Ecumenical Mission of the Capital Area

Ecumenical Child Care Network

Ecumenical Communication Commission, Northwest Ohio

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

Episcopal Church Center, Ministries with Young People

Episcopal Diocese of Alaska

Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem, Pa.

Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles

Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

Episcopal Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, Education Department

Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, Episcopal Church Women

Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Division for Church in Society

Evansville Area Council of Churches

Faith Institute for Black Catholics

Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot

Florida Council of Churches

Franklin Township Ministerial Association

Georgia Christian Council

Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism

Greater Dallas Community of Churches

Greater Flint Council of Churches

Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches

Hawaii Council of Churches

Illinois Conference of Churches

Inner City Renewal Society

Interfaith Center for Faith Action and Response of St. Louis

Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee

Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington

Interfaith IMPACT for Justice and Peace

Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston

Interfaith Mission Service

International Institute for Islamic Thought

International Jewish Women

International League of Muslim Women

InterReligious Council of Central New York

Islamic Society of Greater Houston

Jesuit Social Ministries, National Office

Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Lexington Theological Seminary

Lincoln Interfaith Council

Lower Bucks Center for Church and Community

Lutheran Social Services of Washington and Idaho

Marin Interfaith Council

Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati

Metropolitan Ecumenical Ministry

Metropolitan Ministry of Southern Nevada

Metro-Tol[illegible]do Churches United

Observance of Children's Sabbaths

Michigan Ecumenical Forum

Minnesota Council of Churches

Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference

Missouri Catholic Conference

Montana Association of Churches

Moravian Church, Northern Province

National Black Catholic Congress

National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, Indiana Chapter

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

National Farm Worker Ministry

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

New Hampshire Council of Churches

New Jersey Council of Churches

New Mexico Conference of Churches

New York State Council of Churches

North Carolina Conference of Churches

North Dakota Conference of Churches

North Dallas Shared Ministries

North Snohomish County Association of Churches

Oak Park–River Forest Community of Congregations

Ohio Council of Churches

Ohio–West Virginia YMCA

Parenting for Peace and Justice Network

Pax Christi USA

Peace with Justice Week, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches

Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network

Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association

Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church USA

Presbytery of Cincinnati, Child Advocacy Committee

Presbytery of New York City

Rabbinical Assembly

Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

Reformed Church in America

Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

Rhode Island State Council of Churches

Rochester Area Church Council

Rutgers Presbyterian Church

San Fernando Valley Interfaith Council

San Francisco Interfaith Council

San Francisco Religious Council

Santa Clara Council of Churches

Seventh Day Adventist Church, North American Division

Sisters of Charity, BVM, Women's Office

Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Ind.

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Chesapeake Province

Sojourners

Solid Ground Ministry

South Carolina Christian Action Council

South Coast Ecumenical Council

St. Paul Area Council of Churches

Tampa United Methodist Centers, Inc.

Tarrant Area Community of Churches

Temple of Understanding

Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission

Texas Conference of Churches

Trenton Ecumenical Area Ministries

Trinity College, Campus Ministry

Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

United Church of Christ, Connecticut Conference

United Church of Christ, Office for Church in Society

United Church of Christ, Penn Central Conference

United Church of Christ, Penn West Conference

United Church of Christ, Southeast Association Indiana Kentucky Conference

United Church of Christ, Wisconsin Women's Committee

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

United Methodist Church, General Board of Global Ministries, Women's Division

United Methodist Church, Harrisburg Area

United Methodist Church, Northern Illinois Conference

United Methodist Church, Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts District

United Methodist Church, South Carolina Conference, Board of Church and Society

United Methodist National Youth Ministry Organization, Steering Committee

United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Virginia Council of Churches

Voices for Illinois Children

Washington Association of Churches

Washington Ethical Society

West Side Ecumenical Ministry of Cleveland

Westside Interfaith Council

Women of Reform Judaism

Women's League for Conservative Judaism

Worcester County Ecumenical Council

World Vision Relief and Development

Wyoming Church Coalition

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Section 3

Planning and Promoting Your Children's Sabbath

This section provides guidelines for planning and promoting a Children's Sabbath celebration in your congregation. See Section 6 for suggestions for organizing an interfaith Children's Sabbath involving congregations of many faiths.

Planning Suggestions for All Faiths

Steps to plan a Children's Sabbath in your congregation:

Begin with prayer. The success of the Children's Sabbath—its ability to stir the hearts and minds and hands of people to nurture and protect children—ultimately relies on God's grace. Seek God's guidance for your Children's Sabbath, turn to God for the strength and commitment to plan it, pray for partners to help you in this venture, and thank God for the precious children God has entrusted to our care. (Those of the Christian faith may want to use the Daily Devotionals provided on pages 51-54.) Whatever your faith tradition, and whatever words you choose to pray, know that God is with you as you embark on planning a Children's Sabbath.

Secure support from appropriate clergy, staff, or committees. You may find it helpful to show the video, *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths: Raising Voices, Linking Hands for Children*. In addition to obtaining their approval for planning a Children's Sabbath, do some preliminary investigation into potential sources of financial support for your Children's Sabbath. Of course, you will have a better idea of your budget when you are further into the planning process. You may find that you can plan a Children's Sabbath with little additional expense.

Mark the date on your congregation's calendar. Most Children's Sabbaths will take place on October 15-17, 1999, during a congregation's traditional worship and education time. However, if your congregation has a conflict with the date, select another. If you select a time other than your traditional worship hour, be prepared to do lots of extra promotion to ensure a strong turn-out. Keeping your celebration during the usual hour promises greater participation and communicates that the Children's Sabbath is an integral part of your congregation's worship, work, and witness.

Recruit a committee to plan the Children's Sabbath and activities leading up to or following it. Involving a broad range of people brings a wealth of gifts and experience, builds greater excitement and "ownership" of the Children's Sabbath throughout the congregation, and helps ensure that no single person gets overloaded. In addition to clergy and congregation staff, consider involving religious education teachers, social action committee members, children and youths, and any interested congregation members. Develop a meeting schedule that will allow sufficient planning time. Many committees find they need more frequent meetings in September and October as the Children's Sabbath draws near.

Identify leadership within the committee. Designate a chairperson or co-chairs to guide the planning and ensure that goals are set, responsibilities assigned and fulfilled, etc. You also may want to name a secretary who will keep notes of committee meetings and communicate decisions and other information to those involved. (Be sure to keep informed all who will be affected by Children's Sabbath activities, such as musicians, education program teachers and volunteers, and secretaries.) A treasurer could keep tabs on the budget allotted for the Children's Sabbath and also oversee in-kind contributions donated by the community. As the Children's Sabbath planning proceeds, the chairperson/s should assign new tasks and responsibilities as they arise.

Focus your vision for the Children's Sabbath. What do you hope will happen during and as a result of your Children's Sabbath? Do you want the Children's Sabbath to highlight and affirm the gift and gifts of children? To underscore the responsibility of adults to nurture and protect children? Do you hope to increase awareness about the serious needs of many children today? To broaden the congregation's concern for children to encompass those in the community? Do you want, as a result of the Children's Sabbath, to energize and increase participation in existing congregational programs serving children? Do you hope to build excitement and commitment for starting a new congregational effort to help children? To stimulate new, individual commitments to give time or resources to help children? Clarifying your vision for the Children's Sabbath and its impact will help guide your planning for a successful experience.

Determine the format of your Children's Sabbath. You may decide to start small and build your celebration in future years, or you may want to plan an ambitious celebration now. Choose the approach that is right for your congregation and will provide a successful, affirming experience upon which you can build year after year. These are the major components to consider for your Children's Sabbath:

- **Service of worship:** This is the heart of most Children's Sabbath celebrations, lifting up, in prayer, sermon, and song, God's call to people of faith to nurture and protect children. (See sections 4, 5, and 6 for ideas and resources.)
- **Educational programs:** Educational programs for children, youths, and adults help everyone learn more about the problems facing children, the faith-based call to respond, and ways to make a positive difference. (See sections 4 and 5 for lesson plans.)
- **Advocacy and hands-on outreach activities:** When people have been inspired and called in the service of worship, and have learned more through the educational programs, they are eager to start making a difference for children right away. Providing concrete outreach and advocacy activities on the Children's Sabbath, perhaps following the service of worship, helps people respond and put their faith into action. (See Section 7 for ideas.)
- **Commitment to longer-term responses to children's needs:** The Children's Sabbath is about more than one weekend a year; it is about inspiring new, long-term responses to the needs of children. Provide opportunities for individuals to find out about, and make commitments to, on-going action through information tables, presentations, and sign-up sheets. The on-going action could include participating in existing programs in your congregation, volunteering with a community child-serving program or organization, or even joining a planning committee to develop a new program in your congregation. (See Section 8 for ideas.)

Involve children and youths. The Children's Sabbath is an important time to highlight the gifts, contributions, and leadership of children and youths. However, the Children's Sabbath should not be completely turned over to children, with adults serving only as the advisors and "audience." The Children's Sabbath is meant to be an intergenerational event that demonstrates and celebrates how everyone—children, youths, parents, singles, and seniors—must respond faithfully to God's call to nurture and protect children. (Other occasions celebrated by many congregations, such as Youth Sundays or June Children's Day, are more appropriate times to put the service entirely in the hands of children and youths.) Be sure to involve children and youths in the planning process as well as in carrying out parts of the Children's Sabbath. The various sections of this manual offer specific suggestions of how children and youths can participate in promoting the Children's

Sabbath, leading the service of worship, and engaging in outreach and advocacy activities. Be sure to solicit young people's ideas and suggestions to supplement those found here.

Involve resource people. After you have determined the basic format and activities for your Children's Sabbath, involve resource people from the congregation and community. These may include public education teachers and administrators, staff of after-school programs, child care providers, Head Start teachers, school nurses and other health care professionals, staff of community organizations that serve children, elected officials, and representatives of advocacy organizations working on children's behalf. Secular organizations working for children often are eager to find ways to link with religious congregations and draw on the rich resources congregations can offer. Forging these connections not only will assist you in planning your Children's Sabbath weekend, but also should create partnerships for long-term projects that build on the Children's Sabbath.

Recruit volunteers to help prepare for and conduct Children's Sabbath activities. Some who may not have been able to join the on-going planning committee would welcome responsibility for a specific task in preparation for the Children's Sabbath or on the weekend itself. In addition to recruiting volunteers through personal contact, publicize opportunities through the announcement time in the service, in the congregation's newsletter or bulletin, at meetings, and at gatherings. Tap seniors, children, youths, singles, parents…everyone! The Children's Sabbath is about the role each person can play to nurture and protect children.

Plan to build on the Children's Sabbath. While you are planning the Children's Sabbath, keep your focus on the ultimate goal of stimulating new, long-term congregational and individual commitments to help children year-round. Don't wait until after the Children's Sabbath weekend to think about where you hope it will lead. Instead, make the long-term result of the Children's Sabbath a focus of the planning process. Some Children's Sabbath committees have found it useful to designate a sub-committee on follow-up to begin working on this from the start. (See Section 8 on pages 129-137 for ideas and resources). As you plan long-term follow-up, make sure that you involve the necessary clergy, staff, and committees, as well as other interested individuals. Your resource people also can provide input about community needs and opportunities for partnership. Be sure you have a meeting date on the calendar to convene members of the Children's Sabbath Planning Committee and any others, as appropriate, after the Children's Sabbath to move ahead on the follow-up plans.

Take care of "wrap up" details. After the Children's Sabbath, be sure to attend to details to wind things up. These may include: evaluating the Children's Sabbath—what worked and what you would do differently next time; writing thank you notes to those involved in the leadership and planning and any others who made contributions; marking next year's Children's Sabbath (October 20-22, 2000) on the congregation's calendar; setting a date for the first planning committee meeting (even though the planning committee membership may change); and closing the books on the Children's Sabbath budget. If photographs or videotapes were taken during the Children's Sabbath, you may want to arrange a time to display them to extend the Children's Sabbath experience.

Promoting Your Children's Sabbath

Your Children's Sabbath will have the greatest impact if it is effectively promoted and publicized both within your congregation and to the larger community. Here are some ways to do this:

Spreading the Word in Your Congregation

- Place the bulletin insert on pages 25 and 26 announcing the Children's Sabbath in your congregation's bulletin or newsletter approximately one month before the date.
- Include other information in your congregation's newsletter. (Adapt the sample congregational newsletter article on page 19.)
- Make posters announcing the Children's Sabbath and display them in the congregation's buildings. Involve the congregation's youths and children in making these posters.
- Request time to make an announcement during the worship service one or two weeks before the observance.

Reaching Out to the Community and Media

- Show the video *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths: Raising Voices, Linking Hands* to introduce the Children's Sabbath.
- Adapt the sample news release on pages 20 and 21 for the religious affairs page of your local newspaper.
- Send the news release to area religious newspapers or newsletters, including denominational publications as appropriate.
- If you have any contacts who know a columnist for the local paper, solicit their help in pitching the Children's Sabbath to the columnist.
- Contact your local radio station to learn the requirements and formats for having your Children's Sabbath events publicized as a Public Service Announcement (PSA) or on its community calendar or community bulletin board. You may be asked to prepare a live read script—a brief (10 seconds) script giving the basic information. For example: "[Your congregation] located at [cross streets or address] is planning a special service and events on [date] to involve young and old in responding to the urgent needs of children. For more information, call [name of your congregation]. Your hands, heart, and voice are needed to help children at risk." Type it, double spaced, with accurate names, times, and addresses. Be sure to include your name as a contact, with daytime and evening phone numbers. Send it to the station at least two weeks in advance.
- Invite the local media—television, radio, and print—to attend and publicize the Children's Sabbath. Tell them about aspects of the events that promise to be interesting, and emotionally compelling. Point out that the Children's Sabbath is a way to focus attention on serious problems facing children, and on positive ways to make a difference. Let them know about any well-known speakers who will be participating in your Children's Sabbath.
- Arrange for a local spokesperson or an interfaith panel of speakers to participate on a radio or television talk show program about an issue of concern for the children in your community.
- Write a letter to the editor about the need for strong preschool programs and schools to help children succeed, and offer the Children's Sabbath as a way to learn more and become involved. Watch the newspaper for articles about early childhood concerns, education, or children, so that you can relate your letter to those activities, and time it appropriately.

(For more information and ideas on media work, see *How Shall They Hear? A Handbook for Religious Communicators* from the Religious Public Relations Council (an Interfaith Association of Religious Communicators), published by Mission Communications. Call 1-800-947-0207.)

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Sample Congregational Newsletter Article

[Name of Your Congregation] to Host Children's Sabbath Events

On October 15, 16, and 17, [your congregation] will join with thousands of other congregations across the nation in the eighth annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths. Sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund and supported by Catholic Charities U.S.A., the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and more than 200 other religious organizations and denominations, these events [or this service] will focus on the needs of children and on how people of faith can respond through prayer, outreach, and advocacy.

The 1999 national observance theme is *Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed*, and will focus on preparing children to flourish and succeed through early learning experiences at home, in child care and Head Start programs, health care, and strong schools. The Children's Sabbath will encourage all of us—children, youths, parents, single adults, seniors—to become involved in our congregation and local community to assure that children receive the support they need to grow, learn, and achieve their God-given potential.

At [name of congregation], we will join in this united voice for children by [describe the events, giving dates and times]. Leading the observance of Children's Sabbath here are [names of several of those who will be involved]. All are invited. This will also be a good time to invite other families or children to visit our congregation. For more information, contact [name and phone of contact person in your congregation].

News Release for Local Media

One of the goals of the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is to reach a wider, secular audience with a message of children's needs and the religious community's concern and commitment to meeting those needs. We encourage you to use the sample news release on pages 20 and 21 as a model for explaining the Children's Sabbath to your local newspaper's religion or community news editor and as a means of generating a news story. Here are steps to follow:

1. ***Call*** your newspaper to obtain the name of the religion writer or city editor. If you know someone who works for the newspaper or has contacts there, ask for his or her help in getting the news release into the right hands.
2. ***Mail the news release*** to the right person at the paper in mid-September, about a month before your Children's Sabbath.
3. ***Follow up with a telephone call*** a few days later. Remember, the news media are looking to cover a news-worthy story, not to promote a particular event. In your communication with them, emphasize that the Children's Sabbath is about children's issues of concern to many people, with a practical and inspiring example of how people are taking action. Emphasize that your celebration is part of a growing national movement among religious congregations to *Leave No Child Behind*®. Suggest that reporters contact the Children's Defense Fund's Media Division at 202-662-3609 for background information and a national perspective to supplement your own.
4. If the paper does cover your story, be sure to ***send a letter of thanks*** to the reporter, with copies to superiors. Building and maintaining a good relationship with the religion writer or other reporter may help gain coverage of follow-up efforts developing from your Children's Sabbath and of the Children's Sabbath in subsequent years.
5. ***Send a copy*** of any coverage you receive to the Religious Affairs Division of the Children's Defense Fund to assist in further promotion of the Children's Sabbath.

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SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATELY

Contact: [Your name and telephone number]

[Name of Your Congregation] Joins Nationwide Religious Observance to Highlight Children's Needs

[Name of your town, state, and date]–On [list appropriate date/s], [name of congregation] will lift up the needs of children by [describe planned events].

[name of congregation]'s events are part of the eighth annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths taking place October 15, 16, and 17. The Children's Sabbath is designed to focus national attention on the problems confronting children, and reaffirm the commitment of people of faith to respond through prayer, raising awareness, direct service, and advocacy. Sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) in cooperation with more than 200 denominations and religious organizations, this year's Children's Sabbath is expected to involve tens of thousands of congregations of many faiths.

This year's Children's Sabbath theme is *Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed*. It focuses on the critical importance of positive early learning experiences at home, in child care, and in Head Start programs. It also emphasizes the importance of strong schools and enriching after-school activities for older children and the role religious congregations can play in helping children. The Children's Sabbath will address the obstacles to children's readiness to learn and succeed posed by the poverty that blights the lives of more than 14 million children in America, the lack of health insurance that denies 11 million children preventive and sick care, and the violence that strikes children, including 13 who die from firearms every day.

Parents continue to be the first and most important teachers in a child's life. However, CDF points out that economic necessities require many parents to work outside the home. Increasing numbers of children spend part of their early years in settings other than their homes—in child care and Head Start. These settings also should be stimulating and enriching. Today, 13 million children, including 6 million infants and toddlers, are cared for by someone other than their parents who work outside the home. One out of three children of working mothers are poor even though their mothers work, or would be poor if their mothers didn't work.

According to CDF information, countless older children are in substandard schools without the resources, materials, quality, standards, or expectations to help all children learn and succeed. Furthermore, CDF notes that after-school hours represent another wasted learning opportunity for many children. Experts estimate that nearly 5 million children are left unsupervised after school each week. Left to their own devices, these children are at risk for drug and alcohol use, sexual activity and pregnancy, crime and violence.

"Great national attention is being paid to the potential disaster of arriving at 'Y2K' unprepared, with the computer system problems unsolved," said Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund. "A far graver threat to our national stability and capacity to move ahead into the new millennium, however, lies in the failure to prepare all of our children to learn and succeed, and not to solve the problems in our educational and health care systems. The real peril lies not in one-time computer glitches, but in the enduring impact of a failure to ensure that all our children are cared for, educated, healthy, safe, and ready to learn and succeed in the new century."

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National and local religious leaders are adding their voices to the call to prepare all of our children to learn and succeed. "The Hebrew word 'Torah' means 'instruction or teaching,'" said Rabbi David Saperstein, Executive Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. "From the earliest days, the Jewish community has valued learning and recognized its sacred and practical responsibility to educate children. Today, we are called to action so that every child may have the experiences at home, in child care, in school, and after school that help him or her learn and succeed."

The Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., concurs: "The Church through the ages has recognized the importance of children's education...their spiritual education, to be sure, but also their secular education. In fact, the American system of public education grew out of the Sunday School movement. Working to see that all children are prepared to learn and succeed through quality child care and Head Start programs and outstanding schools is an important expression of our faith and religious heritage."

[Add or substitute a statement from a local religious leader.]

Congregations of many faiths will be responding to these calls to action throughout the weekend of October 15-17, holding special worship services, conducting religious education programs on the topic, and sponsoring a range of activities that engage participants in immediate responses through direct service and advocacy. Another central component of the Children's Sabbath will be individuals and congregations making long-term commitments to help children. These commitments may range from a congregation starting an after-school program to an individual volunteering in a Head Start classroom.

For more information about [name of congregation or organization]'s celebration for the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, contact [insert name of contact person, address of congregation or organization, and telephone number.]

Reproducible Resources for the Children's Sabbath

The following pages provide several resources that may be photocopied. No additional permission is needed.

Children's Sabbath Clip Art

Reproduce the images on the next page to enhance your newsletter, bulletin, flyers, posters, letters, and other materials related to the Children's Sabbath.

Bulletin Insert (pages 25 and 26)
"Wonderfully Made: Helping All Children Learn and Succeed"

This bulletin insert announces to members of your congregation plans to participate in the 1999 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths.

Children's Defense Fund®

National Observance of Children's Sabbaths 1999

Children's Defense Fund®

Children's Defense Fund®

National Observance of Children's Sabbaths 1999

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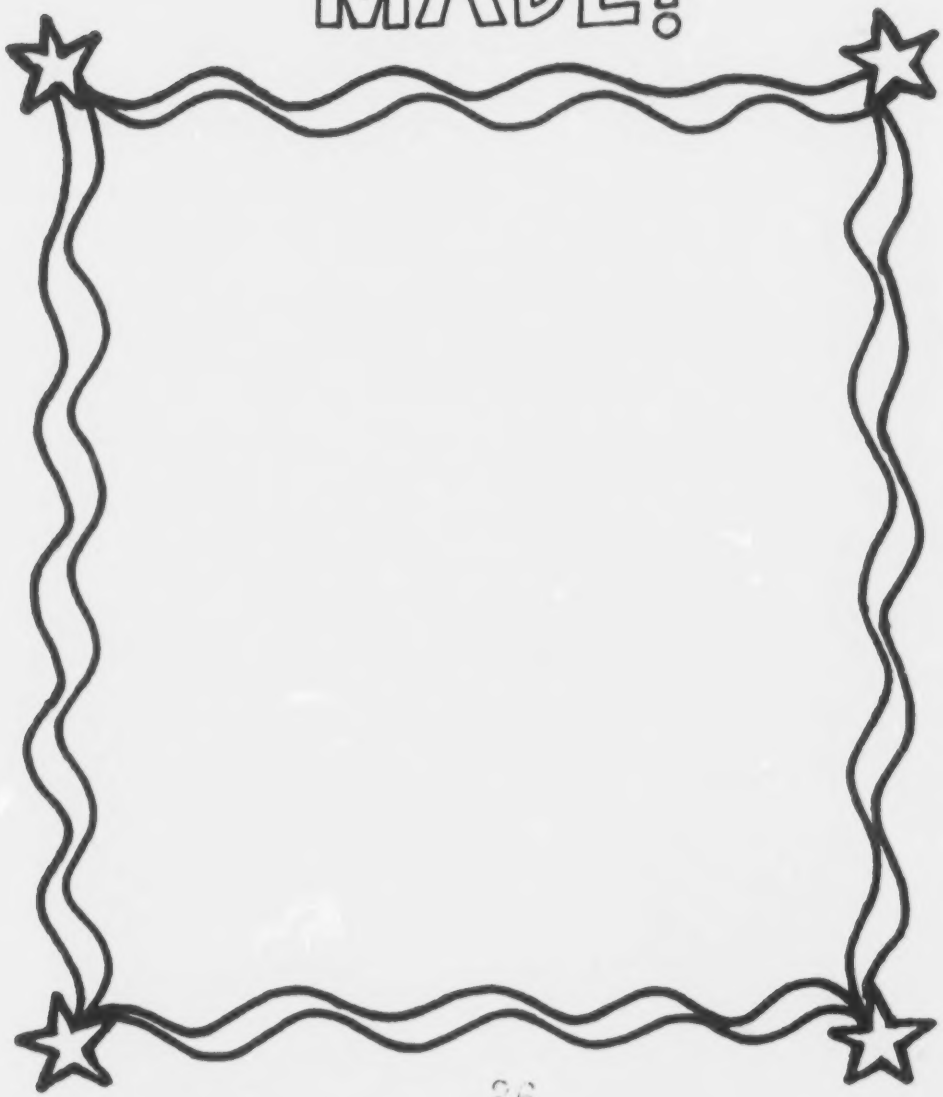
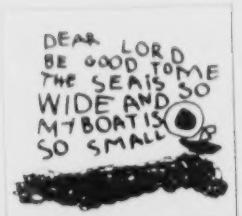
Clip Art

Clip Art

I AM WONDERFULLY MADE!



If we truly believe that every child is indeed wonderfully made, we must work together to remove the barriers to and help each child fulfill the bright promise of his or her life. We must help every child learn and succeed.



Children's Defense Fund®

WONDERFULLY MADE: PREPARING CHILDREN TO LEARN AND SUCCEED

Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
(Psalm 25:4–5)

Every child needs and deserves positive early learning experiences at home, in child care, or in Head Start programs; strong schools; and constructive after-school activities. Every child also needs and deserves the health care, safety, and basic necessities such as nutrition necessary to learn, succeed, and develop to his or her God-given potential. There's a role for everyone to play—parents, teachers, child care staff, health care providers, children and youths, congregations, communities, and our nation!

The eighth annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, celebrated from October 15-17, 1999, will engage people of all ages in making a faithful commitment to help all children learn and succeed.

Beginning with services in synagogues and mosques on Friday and concluding with church and interfaith services on Sunday, thousands of congregations across our nation will participate in the Children's Sabbath through prayer, worship, religious education classes, special hands-on service activities, and advocacy efforts. They will learn more about the problems facing children, reflect on the faith mandate to respond, and make new commitments to help all children learn and succeed.

Our Congregation Plans to Participate!

Date: _____

Time: _____

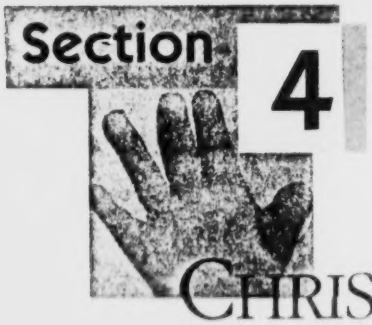
To learn more about what our congregation is planning and how you can become involved:

Contact: _____

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
(Psalm 139:14)

Every child is wonderfully made by God: A preschooler stooping to watch an ant's busy journey across a sidewalk. A first-grader gripping her pencil, tongue sticking out of the side of her mouth in utter concentration at mastering a word. A group of middle school students working together on a project to figure out how electricity works. A high school student playing a trumpet riff in the school band. Behold any child, and you know the truth of the psalmist's declaration that God's works are wonderful, and every child is wonderfully made.

For far too many children, however, the bright promise of God's handiwork is dimmed by challenges no child should face. A home environment devoid of books or stimulation. Unsafe child care. No room in a Head Start program. Schools lacking decent textbooks or dedicated teachers or high expectations. After-school hours yawning with too little constructive activity and too many dangerous lures. Untreated vision and hearing problems, and no insurance for a doctor visit. Not enough family income for three solid, nutritious meals to fuel a mind and body for learning and growth. Unsafe streets, schools and homes that make concentrating on learning difficult. How can children growing up in such circumstances know and believe that they are wonderfully made, and loved, by God? How can such children know and believe that we behold their precious worth and recognize that they are wonderfully made?



Christian Worship and Education Resources

This section provides worship suggestions and resources for Christian congregations, as well as liturgies for Roman Catholic parishes, Episcopal parishes, and Protestant churches. It also contains exegetical notes and sample sermons based on the Revised Common Lectionary (the cycle of designated readings for many Protestant denominations) and on the Roman Catholic lectionary. There is a sample Children's Sermon and a bulletin insert. Finally, a seven-day devotional guide may be photocopied and distributed to congregation members the Sunday preceding the Children's Sabbath to help them prepare, in prayer and reflection, for the special occasion.

Worship Suggestions

- **Use the bulletin insert on pages 55 and 56 in this manual.**
- **Use or adapt one of the sample worship services provided in this section.**
- **Create your own materials on the theme of children and the need for action.**
- **Use readings from worship and prayer books that include a social action theme.**
- **Incorporate resources from your denomination that focus on children and child advocacy.** For example, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has a *Vision Statement* on ministry to children. The Episcopal Church has an *Episcopal Charter for Children*. The United Methodist Church uses *The Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty*, and the Roman Catholic Church has the Bishops' statement *Putting Children and Families First: A Challenge for our Church, Nation and World*. These could be used in place of a more traditional affirmation of faith, as an act of commitment, or incorporated in another part of the service.
- **Select hymns and anthems that focus on children and our responsibilities to them.** (The sample worship services on pages 29-39 include music suggestions).
- **Focus the sermon or homily on children and our responsibility to act on their behalf.** If appropriate, draw from the Sermon Notes on page 42 and read the Sample Sermon and Catholic Reflections on pages 44-47 for inspiration. You also may want to use the Daily Devotionals on pages 51-54. All of these resources are based on texts designated in the Revised Common Lectionary, Roman Catholic Lectionary, and Episcopal Lectionary for October 17 (the Gospel and Epistle readings coincide in all three lectionaries; the Old Testament lessons and Psalms differ).
- **Use or adapt the suggested Children's Sermon** (page 48). Or, in a role reversal, have one of the children give an "Adult's Sermon"—a sermon from a child addressed to adults.

- **Include a commissioning service for educators who "minister" (in the broadest sense) to children**. Following the sermon, these professionals may be invited (contacted in advance) to come forward for a brief service that recognizes their work as a form of ministry, with prayers for God's guidance in their work, and prayers for the children whom they serve.
- **Commission staff and board members of child-serving programs affiliated with the congregation, and celebrate their work as part of the congregation's mission.** For example, Franklin Reformed Church in Nutley, NJ, commissioned the staff and board members of its nursery school and after-school program, and lifted up their ministry to the community.
- **Include prayers for children who are in need.** Specifically name problems afflicting children in your community, as well as crises affecting children across our nation and throughout our world. The priest of St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Compton, PA, called area schools to tell them that he would pray for them. The congregation prayed for each school and principal.
- **Invite a speaker from a program serving children to deliver a "minute for mission"** during your announcement time or to speak at another point in the service. Encourage the speaker to highlight opportunities for members to become involved themselves and to speak out for children. For example, ask a public school teacher or administrator to speak about the challenges facing the school and students, and lift up opportunities for hands-on service and advocacy.
- **Collect a special offering to benefit a program serving children or families,** such as an after-school program, mentoring and tutoring program, community health clinic, or Head Start program. Announce the offering in advance so that members will be prepared. Dedicate the offering during the service. The offering could be in the form of money or items such as children's books, pads of paper and pencils, or notebooks.
- **Invite on-site child care staff, administrators, parents, and children to attend your Children's Sabbath,** or invite the children, parents, staff, and administration from neighborhood schools.
- **Create a Patchwork Quilt of Promise,** as did Mission Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Freemont, CA. Distribute a square of construction paper and a crayon to each person during the service, or in the bulletin, or place them in the pews in advance. At a designated time, invite each person to draw or write a response to "One thing I can do to help a child to learn and succeed." Then invite everyone to come forward (perhaps pew by pew) to tape their square on a paper quilt pattern.

Involve Children and Youths. The Children's Sabbath, unlike a traditional Youth Sunday or Children's Day, is intended to involve adults in the planning and leadership of the day. As members of the congregation, adults must recognize the challenges facing children in our nation, and their collective responsibility to respond. However, the Children's Sabbath is an important time to include children and youths in the planning and leadership of the worship service and all other events.

For example, children and youths can:

- Have an overnight "lock in" at the church beforehand to learn about worship and plan their parts in the Children's Sabbath.
- Design and paint the paraments (e.g., cloth draping the pulpit).
- Draw pictures for the bulletin cover.
- Assist and greet worshippers as they arrive or leave, light candles, or collect the offering.
- Begin the Children's Sabbath by entering in a procession. The children could carry a banner they made.
- Read prayers and scriptural passages and lead responsive readings.
- Write a prayer to be used in the service.
- Present a short drama or liturgical dance as part of the service.
- Sing a special anthem or play an instrumental piece, or perform a song in sign language.
- Remain throughout the entire service instead of departing for church school classes. If the children remain throughout, ensure that the worship service appropriately engages them.
- Have adults "adopt" children to sit with during the service.

Catholic Liturgy

Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed

Sunday, October 17, 1999

This sample liturgy provides suggestions for incorporating the focus of the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths into the standard liturgy for the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.

Introductory Rites

Entrance Song: "God is Here! As We His People" (#667; this and all other hymn numbers refer to *Worship*, GIA Publications) or "Gather Us In" (#665).

Greeting

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

We have gathered on this special day to mark the eighth National Observance of Children's Sabbaths. Today, we join our hearts, hands, and voices with people of faith in thousands of congregations nationwide to lift up the needs of children and commit faithfully to respond.

Every child is wonderfully made in God's image. Yet for millions of children in our nation, the bright promise of childhood is dimmed by poverty, violence, lack of health care, poor quality child care, no access to Head Start, and substandard schools.

Let us be the people of God who recognize that all children are wonderfully made in God's image. Let us offer our prayers and our promises to remove these obstacles and help all children learn and succeed. Let us pledge to put children and families first, for in the words of Pope John Paul II, "our treatment of children becomes a measure of our fidelity to the Lord himself."

Penitential Rite

Priest: Coming together as God's family, with confidence let us ask the Father's forgiveness, for he is full of gentleness and compassion.

Lord Jesus, you came as a child in the fullness of humanity that we may know the Father's love for us. Lord, have mercy.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: Lord Jesus, you called the children to you and blessed them that we may know God's love for children. Christ, have mercy.

People: Christ, have mercy.

Priest: Lord Jesus, you will judge us by how we care for the least of these our brothers and sisters. Lord, have mercy.

People: Lord have mercy.

Priest: May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

People: Amen

Gloria

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.
Almighty and ever-living God,
our source of power and inspiration,
give us strength and joy
in serving you as followers of Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**.

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Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: Isaiah 45:1-6

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 95

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-6

Gospel Acclamation

Priest: Alleluia.
People: Alleluia.
Priest: Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it. (Lk. 18:17)
People: Alleluia.

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-21

Homily

[See Catholic Reflections on pages 45-47. See also the Daily Devotional Guide on pages 51-54.]

Profession of Faith: The Nicene Creed

General Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful)
My brothers and sisters, through this common prayer, let us pray to our Lord Jesus Christ, not only for ourselves and our own needs, but for all people, young and old, near and far.

For the holy Church of God, that we manifest your love for all children, not just this Children's Sabbath day but every day, and so become living witnesses to the Christ who welcomed the children to him, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For all the peoples of the world, especially the children in countries where labor replaces learning, in lands where the education of girls is valued less than that of boys, in places where malnutrition and preventable disease stunt minds and bodies and cut short learning and lives, that all children may one day learn and thrive, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For our nation, that we fulfill the promise of opportunity by helping all children learn and succeed, and for our leaders, that they lead by serving and demonstrate greatness by protecting the least of these, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For our brothers and sisters in need, especially the 14 million children living in poverty in our rich land and the 11 million children without health insurance, that they find justice and comfort in you, in their families, and in the care of congregations and communities, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For ourselves and our community, especially the teachers and school administrators, child care providers, Head Start staff, parents, mentors, and all who help our children learn, that they find satisfaction in their work and appreciation from the community as they guide the discoveries of children, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For all children—the smallest baby learning to recognize his or her father's voice, the preschooler stooping to examine a bug, the kindergartner learning to manage milk money, the junior high student wrestling with the challenges of school and peer groups, and the senior high students whose gazes are drawn toward the future that for some looks bright and others looks dim—that every child know the love of you, of family and friends, of congregation and community as we help them to learn and succeed, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For all who have died, especially those who died too soon and too small, and the children who have died from illnesses we could have prevented, guns we could have controlled, poverty we could have abated, and despair we could have lifted, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

God of love, who shelters us like a mother hen and welcomes us like a father,
hear the prayers of your Church,
and grant us today what we ask of you in faith.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Altar and the Gifts

Offertory Song: "Praise the Lord! You Heavens, Adore Him" (#529)

Prayer Over the Gifts
Lord God, may the gifts we offer
bring us your love and forgiveness
and give us freedom to serve you with our lives.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

Eucharistic Prayer

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer

Doxology

Sign of Peace

Breaking of the Bread-Agnus Dei

Communion

Communion Song: "I Come with Joy to Meet My Lord" (#726)

Song of Praise: "There's a Spirit in the Air" (#531) or "Earth and All Stars" (#517)

Prayer After Communion
Let us pray.
Lord, may this eucharist help us to remain faithful.
May it teach us the way to eternal life. Grant this
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Concluding Rite

Greeting

Blessing
May the peace of God
which is beyond all understanding
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God
and of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Episcopal Liturgy

Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed

Sunday, October 17, 1999

This sample liturgy provides suggestions for incorporating the focus of the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths into the standard Episcopal liturgy for Proper 24, Year A, which falls on October 17, 1999. Throughout the liturgy, we have provided two options, one from The Book of Common Prayer *and the other from* Enriching Our Worship: Supplemental Liturgical Materials *prepared by The Standing Liturgical Commission of The Episcopal Church. The following material has been reviewed and approved by the office of the liturgy for The Episcopal Church.*

The Word of God

Hymn: "God is Love" (#379, *The Hymnal* 1982)

Opening Sentences

Option 1
(From *The Book of Common Prayer*, hereafter referred to as *BCP*)

Celebrant Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
People And blessed be His kingdom, now and forever. Amen.

Option 2
(From *Enriching Our Worship: Supplemental Liturgical Materials* prepared by The Standing Liturgical Commission, hereafter referred to as *EOW*.)

Celebrant Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.
People Glory to God forever and ever.

Celebrant may say
Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise: "Creating God" (#394) or "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" (#423)

The Collect of the Day

Option 1: *(BCP)*
Celebrant The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Let us pray.

Proper 24 *(BCP)*
Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ who came as a child you have revealed your glory among the nations: Preserve the works of your mercy, that your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
People Amen.

Option 2: *(EOW)*
Celebrant God be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Let us pray.

On the Children's Sabbath
Gracious and almighty God, source of all wisdom, love, and justice: Help us on this Children's Sabbath to hear your call to care for the children. Strengthen our hands and embolden our hearts that we may act with your love and speak with your justice, to the end that all children may learn, succeed, and live out the lives for which they were created; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
People Amen.

The Lessons

A Reading from Isaiah 45:1-7

Option 1: (*BCP*)
After each reading, the Reader may say
The Word of the Lord.
People Thanks be to God.

Option 2: (*EOW*)
After each reading, the Reader may say
Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
People Thanks be to God.

Gradual Hymn: "Earth and All Stars"
(#412; based on Psalm 96)

A Reading from 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Gospel Announcement

Option 1: (*BCP*)
The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St. Matthew.
People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Option 2: (*EOW*)
The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ, according to St. Matthew.

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-22

[The Gospel lesson may be presented as a dramatic reading by three persons: "Jesus," a "Pharisee," and a narrator who sets the context and supplies text other than the dialogue, as necessary.]

After the Gospel, the Reader says
The Gospel of the Lord.
People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Sermon

[See Sermon Resources beginning on page 42. See also the Daily Devotional Guide on pages 51-54 based on several lectionary readings.]

The Nicene Creed

The Prayers of the People

[Alternative Prayers of the People may be found on page 48 of this manual.]

With all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord, saying "Lord, bless the children."

For the Universal Church, that we manifest your love for all children not just this Children's Sabbath day but every day, and so become living witnesses to the Christ who welcomed the children to him, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For our nation, that we fulfill the promise of opportunity by helping all children learn and succeed, and for those in authority, that they lead by serving and demonstrate greatness by protecting the least of these, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For children everywhere, in countries where labor replaces learning, in lands where the education of girls is valued less than that of boys, in places where malnutrition and preventable disease stunt minds and bodies and cut short learning and lives, that all children may one day learn and thrive, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For our local community, especially the teachers and school administrators, child care providers, Head Start staff, parents, mentors, and all who help our children learn, that they find satisfaction in their work and appreciation from the community as they guide the discoveries of children, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For all children—the smallest baby learning to recognize his or her father's voice, the preschooler stooping to examine a bug, the kindergartner learning to manage milk money, the junior high students wrestling with the challenges of school and peer groups, and the senior high students whose gazes are drawn toward the future that for some looks bright and others looks dim—that every child know the love of you, of family and friends, of congregation and community as we help them to learn and succeed, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For those who suffer, especially the 14 million children living in poverty in our rich land and the 11 million children without health insurance, that they find justice and comfort in you, in their families, and in the care of congregations and communities, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

For all who have died in the hope of the resurrection, and for all the departed, especially the children who have died from illnesses we could have prevented,

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guns we could have controlled, poverty we could have abated, and despair we could have lifted, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, bless the children.

We pray to you also for the forgiveness of our sins.

Leader and People:

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Absolution

Option 1: *(BCP)*
The Bishop when present, or the Priest
Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

Option 2: *(EOW)*
Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

The Peace

The Celebrant says to the people
In Isaiah we are told that when the lion and lamb lie together, when peace comes, it will be a little child that leads the way. Let us share the peace of Christ with one another, and give thanks for the children among us who show us new ways to walk in peace together.

Option 1: *(BCP)*
Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People And also with you.

Option 2: *(EOW)*
Celebrant The peace of Christ be always with you.
People And also with you.

The Holy Communion

Offertory: "As Those of Old Their First Fruits Brought" (#705)

[You may wish to include the Act of Commitment, found on page xx of this manual, as a way for parishioners to make an offering of themselves—their time, commitment, voices.]

The Great Thanksgiving

Option 1:
Eucharistic Prayer B *(BCP)*

Proper Preface for Children's Sabbath
Because you sent your Son, who came as a baby, who studied in Temple and grew, who called the children to him and blessed them, who gave himself that we may know the fullness of your love for us, your children.

Option 2:
Eucharistic Prayer for the Children's Sabbath
Celebrant The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Lift up your hearts.
People We lift them to the Lord.
Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People It is right to give our thanks and praise.
Celebrant We give you thanks, living and loving God,
for calling our world into being—
for making earth and water, plants and animals, and then
for making each and every one of us in your image—
every woman and man, every girl and boy, of every race and place, rich and poor.

We give you thanks
for loving each of us
as a mother loves her children,
for promising to be our God no matter what—
welcoming us as a father
even when we have done wrong.

On this Children's Sabbath day,
we thank you especially for children,
for the ways they are eager to learn and
for the things that they teach us.

for the challenges that don't stop them and
for the successes they celebrate,
for the way in which each one is
wonderfully made, a gift from you.
And so we join the saints and angels in
proclaiming your glory, as we sing (say),

Celebrant and People
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power
and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the
name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

The Celebrant continues
We praise you, O God,
You sent your beloved child Jesus
to enter our world as a baby,
to grow as a child in mind and body,
to teach others that God loves us
as a parent,
to hug the children close and bless them,
to tell all people that it is only by being
like a child that we may enter God's reign,
to heal children and adults who were sick
in their bodies, minds, and hearts,
to be a friend to people who were poor,
looked down upon, left out by others.

Jesus went even to the cross
that we may know your love,
triumphant even over death,
that frees us to live as your beloved
children.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or lay a hand upon it, and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing the wine to be consecrated.

On the night before he died for us,
Jesus was at table with his friends.
He took bread, gave thanks,
broke it, and gave it to them, and said:
"Take, eat:
This is my Body, which is given for you.
As you do this, remember me."

As supper was ending, Jesus took the
cup of wine.
Again, he gave thanks,
gave it to them, and said:
"Drink this, all of you:
This is my Blood of the new Covenant,
which is poured out for you and for all
for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
remember me."

Around your table, as your children,
O God,
we remember Jesus Christ,
who came in love, lived in love,
and died in love
who was and is and is to come.
We offer to you our gifts of bread
and wine,
and we offer to you our lives.

Pour out your Spirit upon these gifts
that they may be for us
the Body and Blood of Christ,
that they strengthen us
to welcome the children,
to show your love,
to work for your justice.
Through Christ and with Christ and
in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
to you be honor, glory, and praise,
for ever and ever. *AMEN.*

The Lord's Prayer

The Breaking of the Bread

Option 1: *(BCP)*
Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

Option 2: *(EOW)*
We break this bread
to share in the Body of Christ.
We who are many are one body,
for we all share in the one bread.

Communion Hymn: "Jesu, Jesu" (#602) or "Lord Whose Love Through Humble Service" (#610)

Post Communion Prayer

Option 1: (*BCP*)
Let us pray.
Eternal God, heavenly Father,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Option 2: (adapted from *EOW*)
God of abundance,
you have fed us
with the bread of life and cup of salvation;
you have united us
with Christ and one another;
and you have made us one
with all your people in heaven and on earth.
Now send us forth
in the power of your Spirit,
that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the
world through serving the children whom you
created and love—
and continue forever
in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen.

The Blessing (*EOW*)

The Wisdom of God
the Love of God
and the Grace of God
strengthen you
to be Christ's hands and heart in this world
in the name of the Holy Trinity. *Amen.*

The Dismissal

Option 1:
Celebrant Remembering especially all our children,
let us go in peace to love and serve the
Lord.
People Thanks be to God.

Option 2:
(adapted from 15th century Gaelic blessing)
God be in your heads and in your understanding
of children's needs.
God be in your eyes and in your beholding the
wonder of children.
God be in your mouths and in your speaking
to and on behalf of children.
God be in your hearts and in your love for all
children.
God be in your hands and in your serving children.
God be at your end and at your departing.
People Thanks be to God.

A Protestant Worship Service

Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed

Sunday, October 17, 1999

This service provides a model for incorporating the focus of the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths into a Protestant service. It should be adapted as appropriate to conform to your congregation and denomination. It draws on the texts designated in the Revised Common Lectionary for the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (October 17, 1999). Congregations that do not follow the Revised Common Lectionary or that are celebrating the Children's Sabbath on an alternate date may wish to substitute different texts.

Call to Worship

(from Psalm 99:2-3)

Before starting, have the worship leader tell the children that the congregation's response will be "Holy is God!" so that they can join in the call to worship.

Leader: The Lord is great in our land;
God is supreme over all the peoples.
Let everyone praise your great and awesome name.
People: Holy is God!

Leader: Mighty Ruler, lover of justice,
you have established fairness;
you have done justice
and goodness in those who have gone before.
People: Holy is God!

Leader: Praise the Lord our God;
worship before God's throne.
People: Holy is God!

Hymn of Praise: "Lord of Our Growing Years"

Call to Confession

Like the prodigal son, we stray from the lives God wants us to lead and follow our own selfish pursuits. When we recognize that we have lost our way, God welcomes us with open arms and joyous celebration. So with confidence, let us confess our sins before God and one another.

Prayer of Confession

Creator God, you have made each of us in your image, and yet we fail to reflect your love and justice. You have created every child in your image, and yet we don't treat every child as a precious reflection of you. We see some children as valued treasures, and others as lost causes. We invest our time, money, and hopes in some children, while we squander the great potential of others. Open our eyes, we pray, to see that every child is made in your image and belongs to you. Help us to love, protect, and nurture all children. We pray these things in the name of the One who came to us as a child. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Listen! I have something to say! Our past is behind us. We are free to live new lives, be new people, try again to be who God intends us to be. Rejoice! I say again, rejoice!

The Peace

Hymn: "Help Us Accept Each Other"

Prayer for Illumination

O God, you speak to us in so many ways: through the voices of children, in the stirrings of our hearts, in the silence after the last bedtime story has been read. By your Holy Spirit, speak to us now through the Word read and proclaimed that we may hear and heed your call on behalf of the children. Amen.

First Reading: Exodus 33:12-23

The Exodus passage lends itself to a dramatic dialogue which could be done by the youths in the congregation.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Anthem/Hymn: "Lord Speak to Me That I May Speak"

Gospel Reading: Matthew 22:15-22

Sermon

(Use sermon resources in this section.)

Hymn: "God Whose Giving Knows No Ending"

Affirmation of Faith

(Select one from your tradition that most closely relates to the day's theme.)

Other Liturgical Responses to the Word

(According to your tradition, one or more of the following may be incorporated into the service: Baptism, reaffirmation of baptismal vows, or other pastoral rite of the Church.)

Prayers of the People

(Before the prayers of the people, pass baskets containing crayons, pencil stubs, chalk, Band-Aids®, pennies, and pens along the pews. Invite each congregation member to take one item. These items will be referenced in the Prayers of the People. Afterward, encourage members to take the item home and to pray for those it symbolizes.)

Almighty God, the challenges facing children and those who care for them can seem so huge and so abstract that we lose touch with reality. Help us to remember that the needs and prayers of each child, each parent, each teacher, each caring person are as real and as individual to you as the items in our hands.

(Holding up a crayon)
And so we pray this day for the child care providers and parents who provide safe, warm, stimulating environments to spark a love of learning and fuel the curiosity of our youngest children as they scribble with crayons, pet the hamster, and try to taste the Play-Doh®. We pray especially for those providers who are underpaid and undervalued, for those parents who can't find quality, affordable care for their children while they work, and for the children whose potential is squelched in poor care. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a piece of chalk)
We pray for the teachers, covered in chalk dust, who devote themselves to educating our children and helping them flourish to their potential. For their dedication, imagination, and concern we give you thanks. We pray especially for those teachers who have given up on themselves or on the children, those who feel unsafe, those who feel unappreciated. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a pencil stub)
We pray for students gripping pencils as they strive to learn, especially those faced with the challenges of disability, unsafe schools, low expectations from their parents, teachers, and selves, and inadequate resources. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a Band-Aid®)
We pray for children who are sick and injured, whose ability to learn is hampered by vision and hearing problems or illness. We pray especially for those children who don't have health insurance to get the care they need, and for their parents who worry about what to do, who rely on temporary solutions when prevention or treatment is needed. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a penny)
We pray for the youths who are preparing for the world of work, that you will guide them in discovering their gifts and talents, skills and aptitudes, and surround them with teachers and adults who will get them ready to succeed. We pray especially for those young people who fear they will not be able to find work and earn a living, who don't have adults to help them prepare, and who despair of ever succeeding. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a pen)
We pray for our leaders in government, business, and the media, that the laws they write, the bottom lines that are inked, and the stories they pen will demonstrate an investment and priority in our children today for our future tomorrow. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

The Eucharist

(Congregations that will be celebrating the Lord's Supper should include the appropriate liturgical material. See also pages 54–55.)

Act of Commitment

(If desired, children could develop a dramatic scene to accompany the reading of *Greenless Child* (see below). Perhaps one child would be dressed in drab gray, while the other children are dressed in bright oranges, yellows, and other vibrant colors and carry streamers. These children could dance and swirl bright streamers while the child in gray sits quietly and forlornly. On the last line, she could look straight out at the congregation. Any number of people, of a variety of ages, could take turns reading the leader lines.)

Leader:
I watched her go uncelebrated into the second grade,
A greenless child,
Gray among the orange and yellow,
Attached too much to corners and to other people's sunshine.
She colors the rainbow brown
And leaves balloons unopened in their packages.
Oh, who will touch this greenless child?
Who will plant allelulas in her heart
And send her dancing into all the colors of God?
Or will she be left like an unwrapped package on the kitchen table—
Too dull for anyone to take the trouble?
Does God think we're her keeper?

Leader: Who will touch the greenless children, and work to see that every child enters school ready to learn, with strong early childhood experiences that are safe and nurturing?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will believe, and act on the belief, that all children can succeed and perform at high levels?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will work to support children, parents, teachers, and principals to make the best educational decisions possible?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will support quality teaching and let our teachers know their work is valued?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will see that children and schools have the resources they need to prepare every child to learn and succeed?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will support families in times of crisis so the needs of the children will not be neglected?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will work to involve our whole community—health care providers, police, social service agencies, neighborhood groups, voluntary organizations, and other congregations—to see that our children get what they need to learn and succeed in school and beyond?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: We are called to covenant with God and with one another. God will be with us as we help all children, especially the greenless children, to learn, succeed and fulfill their God-given potential.

Hymn: "Eternal God, Whose Power Upholds" or "Take Thou Our Minds, Dear Lord"

Charge and Blessing

(Based on 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10)

Go forth into the world for your work of faith and labor of love on behalf of the children. Do everything with a steadfastness of hope, imitating Christ's love for the children, that you may be an example for all people.
And now may the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
be with you
and with all children, beloved by God,
this day and evermore. Amen.

Additional Worship Resources

Prayer for Children

Great God,
guard the laughter of children.
Bring them safely through injury and illness,
so they may live the promises you give.
Do not let us be so preoccupied with our purposes
that we fail to hear their voices,
or pay attention to their special vision of the truth;
but keep us with them, ready to listen and to love,
even as in Jesus Christ you have loved us,
your grown-up, wayward children. Amen.

(*The Book of Common Worship*)

A Prayer for Parents

Almighty God, from whom we receive our life,
you have blessed us with the joy and care of children.
As we bring them up, give us calm strength and
patient wisdom,
that we may teach them to love
whatever is just and true and good
following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

(*The Book of Common Worship*)

Prayer for Teachers and Students

Holy and life-giving God,
the source of all wisdom and understanding:
enlighten by your Holy Spirit those who teach
and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge
of your truth, they may worship You with joy,
proclaim the Good News with faithful obedience,
and serve you from generation to generation;
through the one who came among us as your
Wisdom incarnate, Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

(From the 1998 installation of the academic dean at Wesley Theological Seminary)

A Teacher's Lament

I work with the children.
I see the pain and the hunger
In haunting eyes of suffering.
They come from places I've never been.

I work with the children
Who need food and coats and shoes,
Who need love and smiles and hugs,
Not angry shouts or violence.

I work with the children,
No place of love to call their own,
No one who fights the poverty
Or guards them from abuse.

I work with the children.
God's gifted them with heaven.
I learn from them of faith and trust.
Yet they're betrayed as Jesus was.

I work with the children,
But there's not time or hands enough.
What will it take for us
To reach these hurting ones?

I work with the children.
Too many empty faces and aching hearts.
Too many childish voices crying,
"Can't you, won't you, help me, please?"

(By Marjorie A. Caulfield)

The Children

Rushing to school, their faces red and expectant,
Dancing and smiling through the classroom doors,
Hopeful for another day, another chance
To live, to grow, to learn.

Many come from loving families,
Eager for new adventures.
For others, school is a welcome change,
A haven from chaos and fear.

A few come in anger and rage,
Daring another one to disappoint,
Afraid to try, to trust, to care
Their hatred masking years of hurt.

How to reach you, little child,
How to touch your heart with peace,
How to remove the hurts ingrained,
How to give your spirit release.

Our God, the answers lie with you.
Let your love and wisdom flow through me.
I place each precious one in your hands.
Give me courage and strength to do your work.

(By Celeste Rossetto Dickey)

Lessons from Children

Children
wondering, open, seeking, restless, growing,
joyful with life and love.
And we are called God's children.
God, teach us to wonder
at your goodness, to be open
to the Spirit;
seeking and restless to serve,
may we grow in grace,
joyful with life and love
that you alone give.

Lord, help us to learn from children
how to be your children.

(By Roberta Potter)

15th Century Gaelic Blessing (adapted)

God be in your heads and in your understanding of children's needs.
God be in your eyes and in your beholding the wonder of children.
God be in your mouths and in your speaking to and on behalf of children.
God be in your hearts and in your love for all children.
God be in your hands and in your serving children.
God be at your end and at your departing.

Sermon Resources

To help you prepare the sermon or homily for the Children's Sabbath, we have provided several resources: sermon notes and a sample sermon from the Protestant tradition, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, and Catholic reflections based on the Roman Catholic Lectionary. You may also want to draw on the Christian Daily Devotional Guide on pages 51-54 (based on the Revised Common Lectionary). Seeing how others have linked the texts designated by their traditions for October 17, 1999, to the themes and concerns of the Children's Sabbath may spark your reflection, provide new insights, inspire your writing, and open your eyes to new connections.

A note about the various lectionaries, or designated readings for this particular Sunday. As you will see from the following table, many of the texts designated by the various lectionaries will coincide. For example, all of the lectionaries designate the same passage from Matthew. It may be helpful, therefore, to review all of the resources provided here.

Lectionary	October 17, 1999	Old Testament	Psalm	Epistle	Gospel
Revised Common	29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A	Exodus 33:12-23	Ps. 99	I Thess. 1:1-10	Matthew 22:15-22
Roman Catholic	29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A	Isaiah 45:1-6	Ps. 95	I Thess. 1:1-5	Matthew 22:15-21
Episcopal	Proper 24, Year A	Isaiah 45:1-7	Ps. 96	I Thess. 1:1-10	Matthew 22:15-22

Sermon Notes

Rev. Dr. Eileen W. Lindner
Associate General Secretary for Christian Unity
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.
New York, NY

The notes below are intended to be used by priests, pastors, and others in the preparation of sermons for the 1999 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths. While the lessons are taken from both Hebrew scripture and the New Testament, the exegetical notes are drawn from Christian experience and tradition.

Exodus 33:12-23

"Exodus" as we know it is a part of the section of Hebrew scriptures known as the five books of Moses. In a general sense, these works recount the history of Israel. More important, Exodus provides a dramatic encounter between God and the people which illuminates the meaning of the history of Israel.

In these verses as Moses is about to lead the people out of Sinai, he engages God seeking reassurance. In this exchange, God promises Moses that as he leads the people, God will go before them and that God knows Moses' name. Yet, even as God renews the covenant with Moses and the people, God reminds Moses, "You will not see my face." So, God's glory, work, and grace will be seen, but even to the faithful servants God is not wholly knowable.

Child advocates always work within the assumption that God has an infinite plan for the cosmos. God has created and actively loves each child—created in God's own image. Those who work on behalf of children, like all other believers, live in faith that while we do not see God's face, we are companioned along life's way by God. God is constant in human history.

Psalm 99

The Psalms are 150 poems of religious sentiment that allow contemporary readers to learn much about the devotion and faith of another era. Authored by many hands and for different purposes, the Psalms form a body of inspiring spiritual texts offering prayers of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and intercession.

Psalm 99 celebrates God's universal sovereignty. The formality of the psalm suggests it was utilized in temple worship, perhaps offered antiphonally. The brief psalm focuses upon the holiness of God. This poem repeatedly enjoins the faithful to praise and worship God. The psalm recollects God's constancy, justice, and forgiveness. The God celebrated in this psalm speaks directly to the beloved people through the pillar of a cloud and is steadfast to the faithful.

God's holiness, that is God's majesty, might and unfailing love, is the foundational sustaining resource to all believers. In God's holiness, the child advocate finds the authority to work for the well-being of God's beloved children. God, whom the psalmist praises for speaking to the beloved community through a pillar of cloud, still speaks to us today. Men and women, parents and teachers and friends are all called to ministry with children sometimes through circumstances and occasions as mysterious to us as a pillar of cloud. By faith, we recognize in it God's own calling.

I Thessalonians 1:1-10

Among the rich Pauline literature of the New Testament, we find the letters to the Thessalonians, which are attributed to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. Having founded the church in Thessalonica, these three continue to bear a pastoral concern toward the church there. The church at Thessalonica was composed largely of Gentiles who had previously been adherents of the mystery religions of the region. The formation of the church had faced both economic hardship and severe persecution. At the time of the writing of the first letter, it has been some time since Paul and his companions were in Thessalonica, yet reports of that church's faithfulness in hardship have reached them.

The opening passage of the first letter to the Thessalonians deserves close scrutiny and ought not to be dismissed as a formula greeting. The authors identify three characteristics of the congregation in Thessalonica: work of faith, labor of love, steadfastness of hope. Each of these is a precious manifestation of faith and a fruit of the spirit. Paul and his companions note the way in which this model of faithfulness has set an example for others.

This letter to the church at Thessalonica tells us in a fresh way that the Holy Spirit is present within the church and brings us gifts for ministry. These gifts show themselves in our works of faith, in our labors of love, and in the constancy of our faith. Children need to be recipients of these fruits of the Spirit if they are to have faith and the fullness of life.

Matthew 22:15-22

The Gospel of Matthew has long been a primary reference for the Church. By the second century, it was perhaps the most widely used of the gospel traditions. Its very organization, combining as it does elements of chronological as well as topical points of reference lends it a highly useable format for church life. It was well suited to ancient near-eastern culture and to a Jewish religious context.

In this well-known passage Jesus is being tested by those who wish to trick him into a political error. Probably in regard to the payment of the poll tax, he is asked about the appropriateness of paying tax under Roman rule. His response often has been misunderstood as drawing too sharp a distinction between the secular and the sacred realms. Jesus was distinguishing between worldly loyalties and more ultimate sacred obligations, and the necessity of humans to be able to know the difference.

In our world today, many, many claims compete for our time, loyalty, and resources. Our busy lives require us to tend to many mundane duties and responsibilities. Modern life is a complex business. Child advocates know well Jesus' lesson in this passage. There are many demands upon us, but none is more urgent, important, or more sacred than preserving God's own beloved children cast into the very image of God.

SAMPLE SERMON

For the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
Based on I Thessalonians 1:1-10

Rev. Dr. Eileen W. Lindner
Associate General Secretary for Christian Unity
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.
New York, NY

As we come to the close of the millennium, self-help books provide approximately one-fourth of all non-fiction titles published in the United States annually, according to *Publishers Weekly*. This trend toward measuring oneself against the standards of for-profit journalism is not limited to diet, exercise, powers of persuasive sales, or adopting the habits of successful individuals. Christian publishers, both commercial and denominationally-owned, have joined the chorus of self-improvement with numerous publications for individuals and for congregations. The congregational literature offers careful instruction on how to become a "megachurch" replete with several Sunday services and standing-room-only crowds. Other volumes counsel congregations on such matters as "10 Quick Steps to Evangelism" and "Revitalizing Graying Congregations."

There is probably nothing wrong with such manuals and guides. Some pastors and congregations may even receive insight and new ideas. The difficulty is that such books run the risk of missing the point. We are not called to be a bigger church, "cooler" church, or even a relevant church. We are called to be a faithful church.

The first letter of Peter, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church at Thessalonica celebrates the faithfulness of that company of God's people and reminds us all of the hallmarks of a faithful church. Paul and his companions obviously delight in proclaiming, "We always give thanks to God for all of you...remembering your work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope." These should be the goals of our strivings within our congregations.

In our ministry with children and their families within the congregation and the community, we are called to works of faith: teaching, preaching, working for programs, laws, and policies that support children and their families.

And we are called to labors of love: kind and patient mentoring of a teenager, supporting the excruciatingly slow progress of a disabled child, advocacy for health care for women and children and for quality, affordable child care.

And we are called to steadfastness of hope that in God's good time all children will have the needed food, shelter, health care, and education that will allow them to grow into the young men and women God intends.

Paul, writing to the Thessalonians whose church found itself in the context of a disbelieving culture, said, "...for in spite of persecution, you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all believers...."

On this Children's Sabbath, God still calls us to works of faith, labors of love, and steadfastness of hope, and challenges us to live these out in our ministry with children and their families. Let us then receive God's word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit that all our children may grow in stature and in grace to the glory of God.

Prayer

O God, come among us this day and by Your spirit enliven us and our ministries with and for all Your children. Bless our children, their parents, teachers, and caregivers. Bless this church and its ministry to children. Make us a nurturing community by Your grace and lead us as we live as faithful witnesses inspired by joy. Amen.

CATHOLIC REFLECTIONS

For the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A
Based on Isaiah 45:1-6, I Thessalonians 1:1-6, Matthew 22:15-21

Walter J. Burghardt, S.J.
Coordinator of the Preaching the Just Word Project
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Washington, DC

HANDS CUT OFF?

Late last January, in the early stages of this homily, I glanced at the front page of *The New York Times*. A picture in living color caught my eye, cut my heart. The place: Freetown in Sierra Leone, West Africa. The background: civil war, brutish, savage, barbarous, inhuman. The picture: a young man, quite normal-looking, except for one thing: His hands had been cut off. Cut off at the wrists. Cut off by a machete. Cut off by another human being. He had begged his captors, the rebels, to kill him. No, they replied; we want to send a message—to your people, to your president.[1]

I was afraid I would be sick. How blest we are, I mused, in our United States! Even the most cruel of our criminals would not do something so uncivilized. Perhaps. Still, I could not help but see in that picture a metaphor. A metaphor for what we are doing to millions of our children. In a sense, cutting their hands off. How? Making it difficult or impossible for them to touch the better things in their world: to experience the life of the mind, to turn the pages of a book, to build sand castles real or imagined, to write a discovered word on the blackboard, to strum a guitar, to dunk a basketball outside the concrete jungle, to finger a Macintosh, to take the Lord's body in spotless hands.[2]

I

Is this exaggerated? Not if you cast a clear eye on the facts. Not if you move the metaphor to the grim reality. We recall somewhat casually that one out of five children in the U.S. grows up below the poverty line. This is more than another unfortunate tragedy, an isolated statistic. Do you know what poverty does to the mind of a child?

Take my little friend Peter. His iron is low, and that slows his ability to solve problems, distracts his attention, keeps him from concentrating. His growth has been stunted, and so he scores lower than others on several tests of academic ability. His family has had to move again and again, and this has disrupted his schooling, even made him drop out for a while. Cold, dampness, mold, allergies cause all sorts of respiratory diseases like asthma, take him from school. Crowding at home, and accompanying stress, interfere with his homework. In this home water is leaking, paint is peeling, plaster is falling, lead is poisoning. He attends one of the poorest inner-city schools, and so his level of achievement is lower than that of a friend in a suburban school with the latest in machines and the best in teachers. His family cannot afford to buy him exciting magazines and books, maps and encyclopedias. He has several responsibilities at home: younger siblings to care for, has to work more than 20 hours a week to help the family eat. His parents can not afford a computer. When college beckons, he simply will not be able to pay for it, even with financial assistance from the institution.[3]

Very simply, Peter is not "ready to learn, ready to succeed." And Peter is not alone; he has 14 and a half million brothers and sisters in deadening situations similar to his: 14,500,000.

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II

So what can we Catholics do about it? Let's start with the school. Not only the parochial school that accepts Catholics and non-Catholics, but the public school as well. Here tough questions raise their heads: Why should parochial schools educate non-Catholic children? And why should Catholic parents improve public education, especially if they have no children suffering therein? As with the homeless poor, so with the poorly educated: We care for them not because they are Catholic but because we are Catholic. What our loving God said to Jacob and Israel, the same God says to each child:

Thus says the Lord,
He who created you, he who formed you:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you....
You are precious in my sight,
and honored, and I love you.
(Isa 43:1-4a)

Each child born into this world is precious to God. And each Catholic should repeat what a loving Jesus said when his disciples wanted to keep little children from bothering him: "'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.' And he laid his hands on them" (Mt. 19:14-15).

We care for each child, particularly the disadvantaged, because each, baptized or not, is an image of Jesus. If the mind of a child is imperiled, it should call forth from us the same compassion we lavish on a child with muscular dystrophy. And if we take such children into our schools, it is not primarily to make them Catholic; it is to bring out the human that is hidden within, to ready them for a life of dignity, to help them shape ever so fully their likeness to the Lord who fashioned them.

III

Concrete suggestions for a Catholic homilist? In my project Preaching the Just Word, we do not expect that a ten- or fifteen-minute homily will solve complex social problems, will give politicians and educators a ground plan for improving their schools. What we do expect is that a powerful homily will raise awareness, raise consciousness, in the pews. Specifically, we recommend that, once a well-informed preacher has laid out certain issues of justice, a parish will gather substantial numbers of parishioners together to put flesh on those bones, to begin the process by asking three questions: (1) What are the justice issues that clamor for immediate attention, for drastic reform, in our area? (2) What resources can we command to attack these issues? (3) Since we cannot do everything, what in the concrete shall we do?

The justice issues are discouragingly many; but here, today, the emphasis is on education and school readiness. Who, within these parish lines, are the children not "ready to learn, ready to succeed?" Where does the problem lie? Overcrowded buildings, substandard science facilities, faulty air conditioning, external noise? Here, researchers tell us, are causes behind low achievement and bad behavior.[4]

Resources? Many Catholic dioceses, even some parishes, are blessed with CEOs in business and hospitals, with doctors and dentists, with builders and architects, with lawyers and judges, with politicians and social activists, with educators and scientists. Is it an impossible dream to harness these competencies, to link them with their non-Catholic colleagues, so as to forge a unified force to save the minds of our children?

What Jimmy Carter's Habitat for Humanity is doing for decent housing—itself a crucial first step for readiness to learn—can we not expand to touch all that goes on within that habitat, within that environment?

Idealist, visionary, dreamer that I am, I look forward to a new millennium where a Catholic family of even modest means will assume responsibility for a poor family, irrespective of race or religion. Not to take over; simply to help preserve, help improve, the minds of its children. One example. Reliable research has revealed how utterly important it is for children's mental development to have their mothers hold them, caress them, read a book to them. But what to do when a mother cannot afford books? So many of our more fortunate families have them in abundance.

Have I wandered from today's liturgical readings? Not entirely. St. Paul is writing to the Christians of Thessalonica, a port city in Macedonia, a thriving commercial center. He is convinced that their Christian life takes place under the providence of God. In that context he tells them how he constantly remembers in prayer to God three aspects of their Christian living: their active faith, a dynamic faith because what they believe they express in life; their manifested love, expressed in actions that at times are quite difficult; and their steady hope and patient expectation, despite the tribulations of the age, that Christ will indeed return (*see 1 Thess. 1:3*)[5].

It is precisely these free gifts of God—dynamic faith, manifested love, and steady hope—that urge our Catholic families today to look beyond their individual households, despite the tribulations that trouble them, and to extend their hands to hands that are cut off from so much that makes life human, livable, enjoyable. Yes, good friends in Christ, join today's children's crusade. Help make one child "ready to learn, ready to succeed."

1 *The New York Times*, Jan. 26, 1999, A1.

2 This homily was written for the Catholic resources for the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A in the 1999 Children's Sabbath manual of the Children's Defense Fund, to galvanize thousands of Catholic congregations into greater service and advocacy on behalf of children. Unfortunately, the gospel for that Sunday (Mt 22:15-21: "Give to the emperor what belongs to the emperor") could not be fitted without violence into the CDF theme, "Ready to Learn, Ready to Succeed." The small segment from St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians does have genuine relevance, as suggested in my final two paragraphs.

3 See, for details, Arloc Sherman, *Wasting America's Future* (Children's Defense Fund, Boston: Beacon, 1994) pp. 12, 15, 19, 20, 22, 25, 27. I have translated Sherman's factual data to a more personal rhetoric.

4 See *The State of America's Children Yearbook 1998* (Children's Defense Fund, Washington, DC, 1998), see 48-51, "Spotlight on Education."

5 See Raymond F. Collins, "The First Letter to the Thessalonians," *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S.J., and Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990) 46:14, p. 774.

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CHILDREN'S SERMON

Text: Luke 2:40–52
The child [Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him. (Luke 2:40).

Who can tell me something about Jesus as a baby? *(Let a child volunteer some brief piece of the nativity story.)*

Who can tell me something about Jesus as a grown-up? *(Let another child volunteer any piece of information. If the children draw a blank, ask if anyone remembers a story about Jesus as a grown-up welcoming and blessing children when the disciples tried to keep them away, or another equally familiar story.)*

Now, who can tell me something about Jesus when he was a boy, in between the time he was a baby and a grown-up? *(Assume that the children will draw blanks...as would most adults!)* It's hard to think of stories about Jesus as a boy, isn't it? We don't have too much that was written in the Bible about Jesus as a child. But what was written is important. It tells us about Jesus as someone who loved to learn. There is a story about Jesus when he was 12 years old. *(Paraphrase story from Luke 2:41-52.)*

It's exciting to listen and learn things from teachers, isn't it? Asking questions like Jesus did is a good way to learn even more.

Today is Children's Sabbath. It is a special day to think about children like all of you and about ways that grown-ups and children can help make sure that all children have what they need to grow strong and healthy and be excited about learning, just like Jesus. At the beginning of the Bible story we told today it says that "the child [Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him." Just like Jesus, we want every child to grow and become strong and to have the food and health care and other things to help them do that. Just like Jesus, we want every child to be filled with wisdom, which means to learn lots of important things, and we want all children to have good teachers and parents and others who help them learn. And we want every child to grow in their relationship with God—to learn more about God, and trust God, and know that God loves them.

Let's pray.
Dear God, thank you for sending your Son Jesus. Thank you for helping us know that he was a child and grew bigger and learned things just like us. Help us to love you as Jesus did. And help us to help all children grow strong, learn things, and love you. Amen.

Reproducible Resources for the Congregation

The following pages provide several resources that may be photocopied. No additional permission is needed.

Christian Daily Devotional Guide

"A Work of Faith, Labor of Love, and Steadfastness of Hope"

No congregation rightly ministers to children without prayer as the source and sustenance of their ministry. Offer the following daily devotionals as a spiritual discipline to your congregation's members, to help them direct their hearts, minds, and prayers on children and the Children's Sabbath. Distribute the devotionals on the Sunday before the Children's Sabbath.

The devotions may be used at other times, as well. The readings, reflection, and prayer may strengthen youth group leaders preparing for a retreat, church school teachers at the beginning of a year, volunteers in a congregational program serving children and families, and others.

To create the devotional booklets: The "Christian Daily Devotional" pages are formatted horizontally to include two devotions per 8 1/2" x 11" page. Make two-sided photocopies of the following pages in the order in which they are found. Fold each set of pages down the middle to create a 4 1/4" x 5 1/2" eight-page booklet. The cover page should begin "Christian Daily Devotional Guide" and the back cover should begin "Sunday, October 17." Staple the booklet in the fold, if desired.

Christian Bulletin Insert

"Growing in Mind, Body, and Spirit"

This bulletin insert offers your congregation members a simple resource they can take home to remind them of the biblical vision of children growing in mind, body, and spirit, and the challenges to many children's growth. It includes concrete and practical steps they can take to respond. Distribute it along with your Sunday bulletin on the Children's Sabbath.

To create the bulletin insert: The Christian bulletin insert pages are formatted horizontally to include two panels per 8 1/2" x 11" page. Make two-sided photocopies of the bulletin insert, and fold down the middle to create a 4 1/4" x 5 1/2" four-page bulletin insert. The front cover should begin "Wonderfully Made: Helping All Children Learn and Succeed" and the back cover should begin "A Moral Start."

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Sunday, October 17

"Who Goes With Us?"

Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me." (Exodus 33:12a)

I can really relate to Moses, can't you? God has destined him–and us–to do great work, and yet a sense of inadequacy keeps getting in the way. "Tell the leaders of the land to let our children go? Well, I'm not really so good with words; maybe someone else should speak out." "Bring up this people, create change in my community for children? Well, there are an awful lot of people to get moving, and they tend to be pretty cranky and difficult. Who's gonna help me?"

To be sure, there is a time to look for partners in creating change and seeking justice and freedom for children. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, helped him figure out how to recruit others to help with the work load (Ex. 18). We too need to find faithful friends to join us in serving and advocating for children.

But there is also a time to recognize that God is calling us to great work on behalf of children, children whose needs are urgent and serious and who can't endure through our hemming and hawing. And this is the moment to remember that God goes with us, and we can rely on God's presence throughout any challenge we face.

O God, you believe in me and call me to great work, and yet I fail to believe in myself and to believe that you will see me through the work to which I am called. Deepen my faith in you and help me, grounded in that faith, to believe in my ability to do your calling. Amen.

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CHRISTIAN DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

"A Work of Faith, Labor of Love, and Steadfastness of Hope"

October 11-17, 1999

By Shannon Daley-Harris

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Monday, October 11

"In Whose Image"

Then they brought [Jesus] a denarius. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:19b-21)

The coin bears the emperor's image, and so belongs to the emperor. Our children bear God's image, and so they belong to God.

This week leads up to the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, a weekend during which congregations of all faiths celebrate the gift of children made in God's image, heed the crises besetting so many children, and affirm our responsibility to meet the needs of children whom God has entrusted to our care.

Take time this week to look at the faces of children. Look at the tender newness of an infant held in her parent's arms. Look at the shining eyes and excitement of a preschooler running around a playground. Look beneath a teenager's cool mask of bravado to see the tentative testing of adulthood. Look at the faces of children who are white, African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American. Look at the faces of children scarred by abuse, taunts, acne, insecurity, illness, or accidents.

Look at the faces of children. See the face of God.

Creator God, you have made each of us in your image. Help me to embrace every child as your glorious image and care for them as your precious treasure. Amen.

Saturday, October 16

"Someone Knows My Name"

...I know you by name. (Exodus 33:17b)

The five-year-old boy, led by his mother, clomped over to me in his beloved cowboy boots. His mother prompted, "What did you want to say to her about her baby being baptized today?" The rehearsed "congratulations" unsaid, he bashfully backed behind his mother, and stared at the pointy toes of his boots.

"I'm glad to see you today, Marion," I told him. He looked up, his face incredulous and aglow. "You know my name!" he exclaimed. "Of course I do," I replied. I had recently led the children's program on the church retreat, and Marion had been a spirited and unforgettable handful!

But his reaction to being known by name stuck with me throughout the church service that morning during which my own son was baptized. For in the sacrament of baptism, we are affirming that Christ knows and claims this child by name.

God knows us by name, and has let us know God by name. To be known so signifies a powerful, personal, committed relationship. When we take the time to know and call by name the children in our congregations and neighborhoods, we remind our children that they are known and valued, by us and by God.

Dear God, you know me by name. I give you thanks for such love. Help me to know children by name, and reflect your love for and value of them. Amen.

Wednesday, October 13

"In the Fray"

Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Extol the Lord our God; worship at his footstool. Holy is He! (Psalm 99:4)

God is mighty not by remaining "above the fray," but because God is so very present in struggles for justice in our world. Our God is a lover of justice, one who feels fierce passion and tender love most especially for those who are poor, vulnerable, and left out.

This confident affirmation of God's reign is not made in the belief that our world is currently just, righteous, and equitable. Instead, it is made in faithful hope and confidence that God's will for such a world will ultimately triumph and be realized. To make this affirmation is to choose to live our lives as ones who also love justice, righteousness, and equity and want to join in bringing that just vision to reality.

When we look at our world today, we know that injustice exists. Today, one in every five children in the United States lives in poverty. Each day, 13 children are killed by firearms. 8,470 children are reported abused or neglected. 2,756 children drop out of high school every school day. Our world cries out for justice, equity, and righteousness.

Let us praise our God, Lover of Justice, by working for justice in our world today.

Mighty God, you weep with those who suffer and cry out for justice with them. Move my heart and hands to join your mighty crusade to make our world just for all whom you created and love. Amen.

Thursday, October 14

"What Does It Look Like?"

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)

What does a work of faith look like? It looks a lot like a determined and caring church member writing her member of Congress to call for renewed Head Start funding that provides poor and disabled children with the services they need to enter school ready to learn. It looks like another member as he helps an eligible family sign up for the Child Health Insurance Program to receive free health care.

What does a labor of love look like? It looks like Alison Stevenson and countless other foster parents like her as they welcome yet another troubled and hurting child into their homes, with hearts big enough to share the challenges as well as the joys.

What does steadfastness of hope look like? It looks like the Reverend Patricia Daley who was called to serve a dwindling congregation of fifteen adults and three children that some felt should be closed down. With steadfast hope she ministered alongside devoted church members and within four years the church has grown into a vibrant, multi-ethnic congregation with dozens of children and an array of programs to nurture and support them.

Gracious God, I give you thanks for all of those who work with faith, love, and hope to improve the lives of children. Help me to work with and pray for them. Amen.

Friday, October 15

"Ripples"

...you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord...so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia." (I Thessalonians 1:5b-7)

Throw a stone into the water, and watch the ripples widen out from it. Act with integrity, honesty, and authentic faith, and it will touch the lives of others.

The Children's Defense Fund has a poster that affirms, "Love is like Algebra. Someone has to show you how to do it...Demonstrate love for the children in your life by giving time, encouragement, and guidance...You'll never find more eager students."

We know how to love because God first loved us. Today, we are called to show God's compassionate love to children. Let us act with integrity and love in all we do, so that we may be ripples of God's love and inspire faith in others.

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund, offers this prayer in her book *Guide My Feet: Prayers and Meditations on Loving and Working for Children*:

God, help me to be honest so my children will learn honesty.
Help me to be kind so my children will learn kindness.
Help me to be faithful so my children will learn faith.
Help me to love so that my children will be loving.
Amen.

Tuesday, October 12

"How We Are Known"

Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by [others] because you pay no attention to who they are. (Matthew 22:16b, NIV)

This description of Jesus often gets overlooked in the course of the familiar narrative about paying taxes to Caesar. After all, the religious leaders merely opened with this flattering line because they were trying to entrap Jesus.

Nonetheless, their description of Jesus offers clues for how each of us may hope to act and be perceived by our opponents as well as our friends. Do people regard me as sincere and as a person of integrity? Do I teach the way of God in truth? Finally, am I unswayed by people with power, prestige, and authority? Do I act fairly and impartially, no matter another's status, income, age, political party, religion, race, or ethnicity?

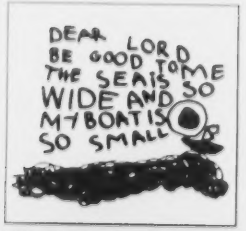
If we hope to be faithful and effective advocates for children's well-being, let us hold ourselves to this standard. Let us be unswayed by the status of others, and steadfastly keep our priority on what is best for the children.

God of justice, all are equal in your sight. You see beyond external trappings and behold each person's sacred, intrinsic worth. Help me to do what is right for children, and be swayed only by your will and not the influence of status. Amen.

A Moral Start.

Remember that all children deserve a Moral Start: the positive example of adults and connections to caring adults and congregations. What can you do to give children a Moral Start?

- Pray for children, those in the congregation and those in the community.
- Volunteer to help out in one of the congregation's programs for children and youths.
- Reach out to young people and families in the community who are not connected with a congregation, and invite them to come to church with you.
- Serve as a role model and mentor for a young person, through Big Brothers Big Sisters or another organization, and remember that what you do to live out your faith is as important as what you say.



Children's Defense Fund®

GROWING IN MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT

The child [Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him. (Luke 2:40)

Today, we pray that all children will, like Jesus, grow in body, mind, and spirit. We pray that they have the health care and nutrition to grow strong and healthy. We pray that they have the early childhood and school experiences that will give them the knowledge and skills to succeed in life and work. We pray that they are upheld by people who care and communities of support. And we pray that they know God's love for them and grow in their relationship with God.

Children Are Being Left Behind

Too many children currently lack what they need to grow in mind, body, and spirit.

- **Children are not getting a Healthy Start.**
  More than 11 million children don't have any form of health insurance, public or private.

- **Children are not getting a Head Start.**
  Millions of children don't have high-quality child care, schools, and other supports to learn and prepare for success in life and work. Nearly five million children are left unsupervised by adults after school, at risk of crime, violence, and unsafe behaviors such as drinking, drug use, and sexual activity.

- **Children are not getting a Moral Start.**
  Too many children don't know that they are loved by God. Our nation, communities, congregations, and parents too often unwittingly send the message that children aren't important, or that some children are less loved and valued than others. Many children lack the guidance and support to grow in their relationship with God, unconnected with congregations or overlooked by those to which they belong.

What Children Need and What We Can Do

A Healthy Start.

All children deserve a Healthy Start, with the regular, preventive health care they need to be healthy and sound nutrition for growing bodies. What can you do to give children a Healthy Start?

- Donate nutritious food that appeals to children, such as peanut butter and all-fruit jams, to an emergency food pantry that helps hungry families.

- Help spread the word about the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in your state that provides health insurance for low- and moderate-income children. Uninsured children in families earning up to $33,400 a year qualify for this program in most states. For free informational pamphlets to distribute, call (1-800-CDF-1200, Press 2).

- Learn more about WIC, the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children that provides nutritious food for pregnant and nursing women and young children, and write a letter to your member of Congress in support of the program.

A Head Start.

Every child deserves the child care and early education–the "head start" that he or she needs to get a strong start in life, and to be safe and secure while his or her parents are at work. While parents should be their children's first teachers, many parents want and need good child care and early education that can help prepare their children for school—for example, child care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten. And many school-age children need good after-school options to keep them safe and productive while their parents are at work. However, far too many American children and families are not getting what they need because good programs are often unaffordable and difficult to find. What can you do to give children a Head Start?

- Volunteer to read stories or help out in a Head Start or child care program or in a local school.

- Donate books and toys for child care or Head Start programs, or computers or other needed items to a local school.

- Offer to give an at-home parent a break, and take her child on a "field trip" to a children's museum or zoo, or just spend time together finger painting or doing another activity.

- Learn more about the schools in your community. Attend school board meetings and P.T.A. gatherings and vote in school board elections.

- Support the availability of safe, enriching activities for young people after school.

- Write a letter to your member of Congress in support of Head Start and funding for improvements in the quality, accessibility, and affordability of child care.

Lesson Plan for Preschool Children (ages 3-5)

Theme/Title Growing Like Jesus

Scriptural Passage

The child [Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. Luke 2:40

Focus Jesus grew and learned. Children today can learn and grow too.

Lesson Objectives

The students will:

- Learn that Jesus was a boy who grew and learned.
- Think about some of the things Jesus learned and the people who helped him learn.
- Recognize that they, like Jesus, grow and learn.
- Identify things that they are learning and people who help them learn.

Materials

Photocopies of page 60, "People Who Help Me Learn," one per child; crayons and markers; large cardboard box, decorated with wrapping paper or markers, if desired; cup, toothbrush, shirt with buttons, sneaker, pencil and sheet of paper, construction paper shapes of triangle, square, and circle, bar of soap, fork, coloring book; mural paper.

Preparation

- Review the lesson.
- Gather the materials.
- Create the "learning box."
- Hang mural paper on wall, write heading, "People Who Helped Jesus Learn," and draw large outlines of figures on page 59.

Overview

Introduce the Theme and Bible Message
Learning Box: Things We Have Learned (10 minutes).
People Who Help Us Learn Discussion (5 minutes).
Coloring Activity (10 minutes).
Game: Guessing and Pretending (10 minutes).
Things Jesus Learned (5 minutes).
People Who Helped Jesus Learn (10 minutes).
Movement Game (10 minutes).
Closing Prayer.

Introduce the Theme and Bible Message

Say to the children, "Today we are going to talk about when Jesus was a boy, and how he had people who helped him learn things, just like all of you are learning new things and have people who help you learn."

Learning Box: Things We Have Learned (10 minutes)

Have the children sit in a circle. Tell them that you have a "Learning Box." Show them the box. Tell them that the things inside the box remind us of things they have learned to do. Reach inside and pull out an item. If it is the fork, for example, ask them what they have learned to do with it—(eat). Invite a child to reach in and pull out the next item. Ask the children what it is. Then ask them what they have learned to do with it. If it is the shirt with buttons, for example, they might say that they have learned how to put on a shirt, or how to get dressed by themselves, or how to do buttons. Have the children continue pulling out items and identifying them and what they have learned to do with them until every child has had a turn. Affirm that the children have learned many things and that they will continue to learn as they grow.

Have a Bible at the bottom of the box (or kept by you off to the side). Pull it out of the box last. Say, "Inside this special book, called a Bible, are lots of stories that teach us about God and about how God loves us. You are already learning about God when you come to church and come to Sunday School, like you did today. You will keep learning about God as you grow bigger."

People Who Help Us Learn (5 minutes)

Next, ask the children to name some of the people who help them learn. Use examples of things they just named, such as tying shoes or coloring inside the lines, and ask who helped them learn these things. Hold up each item and ask, "Who helped you learn how to do buttons?" or "Who showed you how to color inside the lines?" Answers may include their mother or father, an older sister or brother, child care provider or preschool teacher, church school teacher, relative, or neighbor. Try to give each child a chance to respond, even if he or she repeats a previous answer.

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Hold up the Bible and say, "There are lots of people who will tell you the stories in this Bible and teach you about God. Your parents will, and other grown-ups here in the church. I will, and other Sunday school teachers will."

Coloring Activity (10 minutes)

After the children have come up with responses to who helps them learn, distribute the photocopied page with the heading, "The People Who Help Me Learn," and crayons or markers. Ask each child to color in the pictures of the people who help her or him learn new things. As the children finish coloring, ask them to name the figures in their pictures, and help to label them.

While the children are coloring, put the items back in the learning box.

Game: Guessing and Pretending (10 minutes)

In turn, have each child reach into the learning box and touch an item without looking at it. Have them try to guess what they are touching. After they have made their guess, have them pull out the item and see if they were right. Then have them pretend (without using any words) to do something they have learned with the item, such as brushing their teeth. Have the other children guess what they are doing. Then have the remaining children take their turns.

Things Jesus Learned (5 minutes)

Now, ask the children what kinds of things they think Jesus learned when he was a boy. Remind them that Jesus was born as a baby at Christmas, and before he was the grown-up who taught people about God, he had to grow bigger and learn things.

To start with, name some of the things the children listed earlier as their own learning. For instance, ask, "Do you think Jesus learned how to get dressed by himself?" Let the children respond. (If you want, you can add simple clarifications, such as, "He would have learned how to put on a sort of robe that went over his head and tie it with a belt, instead of putting on pants with zippers and shirts with buttons like you do.") "Do you think Jesus learned how to recognize his colors?," etc.

People Who Helped Jesus Learn (10 minutes)

Ask the children, "Did Jesus have a mommy who helped him learn?" "Does anybody remember her name?" (If the children can't come up with her name, tell them it was Mary.) "Did Jesus have a daddy who helped him learn? Does anybody remember his name?" "Do you think that Jesus had teachers who helped him learn?" "Do you think who the leaders of the place where Jesus went to pray helped him learn?" "How about neighbors, do you think that the grown-ups who lived near Jesus helped him learn sometimes?"

Have a large piece of mural paper hung on the wall. Ahead of time, print across the top of the paper "People Who Helped Jesus Learn and People Who Help Us Learn." Spaced along the paper (at intervals of two feet or so) have labeled outlines of the figures named above. (Examples are provided on page 59.) Point out and name the people. Invite the children to color in the figures with crayons. Then, invite them to stick their drawings of people who help them learn onto the mural paper. Arrange to hang the mural in the church building where others can see it.

Movement Game (10 minutes)

Have all of the children stand on one side of the room. Say, "If you have learned how to brush your teeth, skip to the other side of the room. If you are going to learn how to do that, hop to the other side of the room." Once the children have all skipped or hopped to the other side of the room, offer the next learned skill and mode of movement (skip, hop, walk, run, walk backwards, walk with little steps, walk with big steps, and so on).

Alternative Game

Have the children form a circle. Using a large, easy-to-catch ball, either throw or roll it to the children, depending on their age and ability. When the ball comes to them, they should name something that they have learned to do. Make sure that each child gets at least one turn. It is okay if children repeat each others answers. What is important is for the individual child to reflect on things she or he has learned. Answers may include: tie my shoes, count to (a certain number), recognize letters (A, B, X…), write my name, or get dressed by myself.

Closing

Ask the children to repeat each line of the prayer after you.

Dear God, (children repeat "Dear God.")
Thank you (repeat) for helping us to learn (repeat)
lots of things (repeat) just like Jesus (repeat)
Thank you (repeat) for giving us (repeat)
people to help us learn (repeat) just like Jesus (repeat)
Amen

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People Who Helped Jesus Learn

Enlarge these figures either by drawing freehand or on a photocopier) for the mural paper.

[Mary]

[Teacher]

[Joseph]

[Neighbor]

Based on art by Megan Jeffery
CBNS © 1998 Abingdon Press

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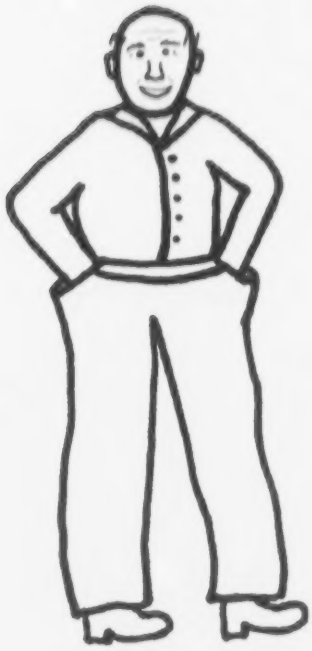
People Who Help Me Learn



Lesson Plan for the Elementary Grades

(with adaptations for grades K-2 and grades 3-5)

Theme/Title Jesus Grew in Mind, Body, and Spirit and So Can We!

Scriptural Passage

The child [Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.
(Luke 2:40)

Focus Learning was important when Jesus was a boy, and it is important now. Growing in our minds, bodies, and relationship with God is vital. Every child should be able to grow in these ways. Families, schools, churches, and communities can all help to see that children grow in mind, body, and spirit.

Lesson Objectives

The students will:

- Learn about when Jesus was a student, and how he grew in mind, body, and spirit.
- Reflect on ways that children now grow in mind, body, and spirit.
- Participate in an active response to help other school children.

Materials

Butcher paper and markers; Bible times snack foods: figs, dates, nuts, pita, grape juice, water, dried fish; square of cardboard, clay, and sturdy twig for making clay tablets; strip of cloth (measuring 2 inches by 2 feet) for each child; brown paper bag and two foot-long dowels for making a scroll; school supplies such as notebooks, pads, pencils, sharpeners, and erasers. (Alternatively, the week before the lesson, ask each child to bring in some of these supplies, bags or boxes to hold school supplies, and materials to decorate them such as stickers, paint, and ribbon.)

Preparation

- Review lesson plan.
- Gather materials.
- Make a clay tablet by pressing clay onto a square of cardboard. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap to keep clay moist. Find several strong twigs for the children to use to write on the clay tablets.
- Make a scroll by cutting a brown paper bag into a rectangle and stapling the short sides onto two dowels. If you will be teaching older children (grades 3-5), write out Psalm 117 on the paper bag from right to left (word order reversed.) If you will be teaching younger children (grades K-2), draw simple pictures, from right to left, of the creation story (first frame, make half black and other half white; second frame, draw an ocean with waves below a sky; third frame, show brown land with plants; fourth frame, draw a moon and stars; fifth frame, draw a few animals; sixth frame, draw figure of man and woman; seventh frame, use your imagination!)

If you will have at least two assistants, you may want to conduct the lesson in the style of "learning centers," where the class divides into thirds. Each group starts at a different "learning center" and then moves on to the other two. Otherwise, conduct the three parts of the lesson in sequence.

Overview

Introduce the Theme and Bible Message (1 minute).
Explore the Message.
"Jesus grew and became strong:" Brainstorming, snack, discussion (20 minutes).
Jesus was "filled with wisdom:" Experience a synagogue school, read from a scroll, write on a tablet, discussion (20 minutes).
"And the Spirit was upon him:" Discussion, learning by doing (15 minutes).
Closing (5 minutes).

Introduce the Theme and Bible Message

(1 minute)

Tell the children, "In the Bible it says that the child Jesus grew and became strong, and he learned many things. God loved him and he loved God." Say, "Learning is important; it was important when Jesus was a boy and it is important now. Growing in our minds, bodies, and relationship with God is important. Every child should be able to grow in these ways. Families, schools, churches, and neighborhoods can all help to see that children can grow."

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Explore the Message

Jesus grew and became strong: (20 minutes)

Brainstorming: Ask, "What things helped Jesus and help us become strong?" Have the children brainstorm until they come up with these, and perhaps other, categories: healthy food (milk, fruit, and vegetables), health care when we are sick or hurt, plenty of sleep, exercise, homes that are safe and warm, clothes that protect us from the weather. For younger children (K-2), as each category is named, draw simple symbols or pictures on butcher paper. For older children (Grades 3-5), write words.

Snack from Jesus' time: Talk about the healthy foods Jesus would have eaten, and let the children sample some. Have on hand the following: figs, dates, walnuts *(be sure to know about any students' food allergies)*, pita bread, water or grape juice. If you can find some dried fish, let the adventurous children try some! Then have children brainstorm a list of healthy foods to eat today. *(Fig Newton cookies may be a more popular snack once the children have sampled the more authentic foods.)*

Discussion about Healthy Eating: Ask, "How do parents help children eat healthy foods to make them grow strong?" *(Responses may include: serve healthy food for breakfast and dinner, pack healthy lunches, limit sugary snacks or junk food.)*

Tell the children, "Schools help children eat healthy foods by offering school lunches that include important food groups like milk, vegetables, and fruit. When parents don't have enough money to pay for school lunches, their children can buy them for less money or even get them for free. That's another way that schools help children eat healthy foods."

Finally, ask, "How do churches and neighborhoods help children eat healthy foods to make them grow strong?" *(Responses may include food pantries, soup kitchens, gift baskets of food on Thanksgiving and other holidays, and other ministries. If the children don't know about these, introduce them to them. You may also say, "There is a special program called WIC that gives coupons that are like money to help mothers with babies and very young children buy healthy food." Be sensitive to the possibility that this may apply to children in your class.)*

Discussion about Health Care: Ask the following questions to stimulate discussion. If younger children have a hard time coming up with responses for some of the questions, you may introduce and talk about some of the suggested responses.

Ask, "What do parents do when children are sick or hurt? What do they do when they are healthy to help them stay that way?" *(Responses may include: take them to the doctor, give them medicine, take them for check-ups.)*

Ask, "How do schools help keep kids healthy?" *(Responses may include: school nurse, practicing fire drills, and checking our eyes and ears.)* Tell the children about ways that your church and community help children stay healthy. You may want to mention "giving shots to keep you from getting bad sicknesses," doctors offices, and hospitals.

Ask, "Why is being healthy important for learning? How can not being healthy affect your learning?" *(Responses may include: if you are sick, you may miss school and have hard time catching up; if you have a problem with your eyes or ears, you can't hear the lesson or see the chalk board; if you don't feel well and are in class, you can't concentrate on lesson. Younger children may have a hard time brainstorming these kinds of answers. In that case, talk about the answers rather than having the children come up with them.)*

Jesus was "filled with wisdom" (20 minutes)

Experience a synagogue school: Place a chair at the front of the room, and have a clear spot in front of it for the children to sit. Have the children sit on the floor, while you sit in the chair. Tie a strip of cloth around each child's head as a headdress.

Tell the children that Jesus would have gone to school in the synagogue, starting when he was about five years old, and he might have worn a headdress just like they are. Tell them that the teacher sat in a chair, while the students sat on the ground at the teacher's feet.

Read from a scroll: Tell the children, "Jesus learned from one part of our Bible, this part *(hold up a Bible and show the children the Old Testament section)*, which we call the Old Testament." Ask, "Does anyone know what we call the rest of our Bible?" Supply the answer if necessary. Continue, "The Old Testament would have been like Jesus' schoolbook, and he would have learned to read and write by studying it."

Hold up the scroll you have prepared and tell them, "This is called a scroll. Scrolls like this were used instead of books." Continue, "The words we read today are English, but the words Jesus read were a language called Hebrew. Hebrew is written from right to left, the opposite of how we read English."

Tell the creation story to younger children as you point to each picture in turn. Have the older children take turns reading from the scroll. Remind them that it reads from right to left. Older children may enjoy deciphering the writing which is going in the "wrong" direction.

Write on a tablet: Tell the children that Jesus would have written on a clay tablet instead of paper as they do. Have the children take turns making marks with a strong twig on the clay tablet you have prepared. *(Have extra twigs in case it breaks, or use an unsharpened pencil.)*

Discussion: Invite the children to compare schools in Jesus' time and schools today. Ask, "How were schools in Jesus' time the same as our schools?" *(Responses may include: there was a teacher, there were students, they learned how to read, they started at about the same age.)* Ask, "How were they different?" *(They wrote on tablets, not paper; they read from scrolls, not books; the children sat on the floor, not in chairs; there weren't any student desks.)*

Ask, "What makes a school a good place to learn?" *(Responses may include: teachers who are nice to everybody and treat all students fairly; students who like to learn; when everybody tries to do what is right; when school feels like a safe place; and there are enough books and other things for learning.)*

Ask, "How does it feel or how do you think it feels to go to a school that is a good place to learn?" *(Responses may include: the children are excited about learning, are ready to go on to the next grade, will be ready for college or jobs.)* Ask, "How does it feel or how do you think it feels to go to a school that is not a good place to learn?"

Ask the following, allowing time for responses to each: "What could anybody do to help schools be good places to learn? Is there something you can do? How about moms and dads and grandmothers and grandfathers? Can the church help make schools a good place to learn?" *(Since children are likely to "compartmentalize" the church and school, and not understand ways the church might help schools, you may need to offer suggestions, such as, "The church could pray for the students and teachers, or we could send grown-ups to be helpers in the classroom.")*

And the spirit of God was upon him (15 minutes)

Discussion: Growing in our relationship with God. Ask, "How can we learn more about God? What can we do to feel closer to God?" *(Responses may include: Pray, go to church to worship, go to Sunday School, think about God, ask questions about God.)*

Learning by Doing: Tell the children, "One way of learning more about God is to think about the things you do and the experiences you have. For example, say you saw a kid at school being pushed around and scared by some bigger kids, and you decided to start a Peace Club to help kids work out their disagreements and get along together. When the Peace Club helped the kids become better friends, you might think about how God wants people to be friendly, not to fight. You might even think that Jesus started his own kind of Peace Club when he taught his friends about how God wants us to love each other. In that way, you would have learned more about God from what you did or experienced."

Tell the children that they are going to do something now that will help them learn more about God. Have the group make school kits—including items such as note pads, pens, pencils, sharpeners, and erasers—to donate to students who need them. You may even want to include gift certificates to a local bookstore. Have the children decorate bags or boxes to put them in.

Have them talk about what it might be like to go to school and not to have the things you needed for your school work. How do they think a kid might feel when she or he receives a present like this? How will they feel knowing that they have made such a thoughtful gift? How do they think God feels about this?

Next, ask the children if they can think of things they can give to other students that don't cost any money. If they need some examples to get started, you could mention some of the following: a smile, a hug, being a friend if someone is lonely, and making sure other children are a part of a game being played.

Tell them that they have just learned more about God by thinking about an action they took, and other things they could do, to help someone. Tell them that this is something that they can do any time they are involved in an action or experience, and they will

learn more about God. Tell them that unhappy experiences can also be opportunities for learning by doing: if they are in a group that leaves out a classmate, they can think about how God feels about our doing things like that.

Closing (5 minutes)

Gather all of the children back in the "synagogue school" area. They can put headdresses back on if they wish. Lead them in a closing prayer:

Dear God,
Thank you for helping us to grow strong in our bodies, our minds, and our relationships with you. Thank you for all of the people who help us learn. We pray for all children, that they will be able to learn and grow. We pray that parents, teachers, churches, and neighborhoods will work together to help all children learn. We pray in the name of your Son who taught us about you. Amen.

Lesson Plan for Middle School I (Grades 6, 7, & 8)

Theme/Title Learning Like Jesus

Scriptural Passage Luke 2:41-52

Focus Jesus was a boy who was excited about learning. He grew in mind, body, and spirit. All children should be helped to be excited about learning and to grow in mind, body, and spirit. Families, schools, churches, and communities can help see that children learn and grow.

Lesson Objectives

The students will:

- Learn about Jesus when he was a boy their age, and about how he grew in mind, body, and spirit.
- Reflect on ways that children now grow in mind, body, and spirit.
- Participate in an active response to help other school children.

Materials

Copies of "Lost in Love of Learning"; butcher paper and marker; supplies for "Responding to the Message" activity, if appropriate; two dowels and a brown paper bag for scroll, and ribbon or strip of cloth.

Preparation

- Review the lesson.
- Assemble the materials.
- Make a copy of page 67 "Lost in Love of Learning" for each student.
- Make signs saying "Nazareth," "Jerusalem," and "Temple." Post Nazareth and Jerusalem signs on opposite sides of classroom for dramatic enactment. Post the Temple sign a few feet away from the Jerusalem sign.
- Make a scroll by cutting a long rectangle from the paper bag and stapling the short ends to the dowels. Roll both sides of the scroll in toward the middle, and tie with ribbon or strip of cloth.
- Contact a local school to learn of any needs it has that your class might fill.

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Overview

Introduce the Theme and Bible Message (10 minutes).
Explore the Message (20 minutes).
Respond to the Message (20 minutes).
Closing (5 minutes).

Introduce the Theme and Bible Message
(10 minutes)

Remind the students that today is Children's Sabbath. This year, there is a special focus on learning, and what children, parents, schools, churches, and communities can do to help children grow, learn, and succeed.

Tell the class that we usually think of Jesus as a teacher, someone who helped us learn about God. Ask if anyone remembers anything about Jesus as a learner or student. Tell them that there is one story in the Bible that tells about Jesus as a boy who loved to learn.

Get volunteers to take different roles for an enactment of Luke 2:41-52 using the script "Lost in Love of Learning." In addition to the parts of Jesus and his parents, assign a narrator, group of travelers, teachers at the temple, and people at the temple. If the students are not comfortable acting out the drama, have them remain seated and simply do a reading of the script.

After the play has been enacted or read, invite the children to respond to it. Ask if they have ever felt like Jesus—getting so caught up in what they were learning that they lost track of everything else. Let the students know that the learning they talk about does not have to be related to school. It could be learning to in-line skate or play an instrument or master a computer game. Ask them what they think Jesus was so excited about. Why do they think his parents didn't understand? Has there ever been a time when they were excited about learning something important, and their parents or other people didn't understand or realize how important it was? What gets them excited about learning? Note that when we are very young, parents are our first and most important teachers, but as we grow older, other people help us learn. Ask them to name some of the people who teach them things and help them learn.

Explore the Message (20 minutes)

For the following discussion, possible responses the students may offer are indicated in parentheses and italics. If you find that the students have a difficult time responding to the open-ended questions, you may want to list the things mentioned as possible responses, and then ask the students to talk about one of them as it has affected them or someone they know.

Note, "At the end of the story, it says that Jesus 'increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.'" Ask, "What does that mean in your own words?"

Ask, "What are the things that will help you to 'increase in wisdom'?" *(Responses may include: try hard in school, respect the teachers, behave appropriately, and try to get help if they are having trouble.)*

Ask, "What are things that get in the way of kids 'increasing in wisdom'?" *(Responses may include: peer pressure not to "act smart"; schools that don't feel safe or are violent; schools that don't have good materials or too many students in each class or teachers that are burned out; when kids don't get enough to eat and are hungry in class; when kids don't get health care and miss class or can't see the board or hear the teacher.)*

Ask, "What are the things that will help you 'increase in years'?" *(That's not as silly a question as it sounds. Besides the natural aging process, urge them to think of ways to protect their health and safety. Responses may include health check-ups and care when they are sick, not smoking or taking illegal drugs, avoiding alcohol, only riding in cars with safe drivers, and being aware of the danger of guns.)*

Ask, "How can you increase 'in divine favor'? What can you do to improve your relationship with God?" Point out that in one sense, we can't "increase in divine favor" by anything we say or do; God loves us unconditionally and graciously. However, there are things we can do so that we feel closer to God. *(Possibilities include: praying, reading the Bible, attending church school and youth group, attending worship, listening to the sermon, asking questions they have about God, and trusting God. Other possibilities include doing things God wants us to, such as showing compassion and working for justice.)*

Ask, "How can you increase in human favor?" *(Possible responses include: being a good friend, showing compassion, respecting their parents and teachers.)*

Respond to the Message (20 minutes)

Tell the students that now they will work on a project that will help other children learn. In doing this project, they will also grow closer to God and show compassion—all things that are part of increasing in wisdom, and divine and human favor.

Have the students brainstorm a list of ways that they could help students or a school in need. *(If possible, identify in advance a school and get a sense of what is needed. Describe the school to your class and broad areas of problems or need.)*

Ideas for projects might include hosting a fund-raising activity to buy books for a school, volunteering as reading buddies for younger children, or arranging to help paint or otherwise fix up a school classroom or playground.

Have them rank the ideas, determining which one is most feasible. After selecting one idea to pursue, make a list of steps necessary. Plan to follow-through on the project over the coming months.

NOTE: If this open-ended process to select and pursue a project does not feel do-able for your class, in advance decide to substitute a more defined activity during this period, such as assembling school supply kits to donate to a school with children in need. The week before conducting this lesson, ask your students to bring in school supplies (such as notepaper, pencils, erasers, notebooks, etc.) for this lesson. Alternatively, you could have each child write a letter thanking someone who has helped them learn.

Closing (5 minutes)

Invite the students to assemble for reflection and a closing prayer. Ask them if they have any thoughts about today's class that they would like to share. Then ask each student to name something that he or she has been excited to learn in the past year. This does not have to be restricted to traditional classroom subjects. For example, it could be learning to in-line skate or dive.

Dear God,
Thank you for the things we learned today and the things we have learned over time. Thank you for giving us bodies that grow strong, minds that love learning, and hearts that seek you. Help us to be good friends, to those we know and even those we don't, and help us to see that everyone has a chance to grow in mind, body, and spirit. These things we ask in the name of your Son, who was both student and teacher.
Amen.

"Lost in Love of Learning"

Based on Luke 2:41-52

Narrator: Now every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when Jesus was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. *[Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, standing by "Nazareth" sign, cross room to join crowd of Passover celebrants by "Jerusalem" sign.]*

Narrator: When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. *[Mary and Joseph start back across the room toward "Nazareth" where they started, along with some of the crowd of Passover celebrants. Jesus sits at feet of several teachers sitting on chairs by the "Temple" sign. Have other students join Jesus on the floor.]*

Narrator: Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, Mary and Joseph went a day's journey. *[Mary, Joseph, and fellow travelers continue toward starting point.]*

Mary: Joseph, we've been traveling for a day now. Isn't it strange that we haven't seen our son Jesus in all this time? Perhaps we should look for him, to make sure that everything is alright.

Narrator: Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

Mary and Joseph: *[mingling in crowd of fellow travelers]* Have you seen Jesus? We haven't seen him since we left Jerusalem. Was Jesus traveling with you during any of the journey yesterday? Would you let us know if you see Jesus? We are starting to get worried.

Narrator: When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

Joseph: Mary, I don't think he is anywhere in our group. I think it is best that we go back to Jerusalem and see if by any chance he is still there…although I can't imagine why he would have stayed behind. *[Mary and Joseph leave group and return to Jerusalem location.]*

Narrator: After three days they found him, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Teacher: *[Unrolls scroll and pantomimes reading it aloud.]*

Jesus: *[Pantomimes asking a question and making a point. Teacher and other students should show appropriate expressions of amazement, nudging each other and nodding approvingly.]*

Narrator: When his parents saw him, they were astonished.

Mary: *[fairly worked up and upset]* Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.

Jesus: *[calmly and reassuringly]* Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?

Narrator: But Jesus' parents did not understand what he said to them. *[Mary and Joseph look puzzled and shake their heads, or make other appropriate gestures.]*

Narrator: Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. *[Mary, Joseph, and Jesus walk back across classroom toward Nazareth location. Mary or Joseph's hand might rest on Jesus' head or shoulder in suggestion of parental authority.]* His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Lesson Plan for Senior High (Grades 9–12)

Theme/Title Savage Inequalities

Focus The Beatitudes give us a stark understanding of God's concern for and presence with those who are most disadvantaged. Today many students experience vast disadvantages while others experience rich advantages. God calls us into faithful concern and presence with disadvantaged students, so that all might learn and grow and flourish as God intends.

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Deepen their understanding of the Beatitudes in Luke.
- Learn about inequalities in schools and learning opportunities.
- Reflect on the meaning of the Beatitudes for current situations.
- Engage in an active response to school inequalities that mirrors God's concern for those who are most disadvantaged.

Materials

A Bible or a copy of Luke 6:20-26 for every student; copies of the handout, "Savage Inequalities," on page 70; butcher paper and markers; copies of the handout, "Students with Smart Solutions," on pages 71 and 72.

Preparation

Review the lesson and gather the materials, making the number of copies needed.

Overview

Introduce the Theme and Bible Message (introduction, antiphonal reading of scripture, dramatic reading from *Savage Inequalities*) 10 minutes.

Explore the Message (large group discussion and small group brainstorming) 20 minutes.

Respond to the Message (activity) 20 minutes.

Closing 10 minutes.

Introduce the Theme and Bible Message (10 minutes)

Introduction: Remind the students that today is Children's Sabbath. Tell them that it is a time to look at what children need to learn and grow and succeed, and at what young people, parents, churches, and communities can do to make sure that every child gets a chance to learn and grow and succeed.

Antiphonal Reading: Have the class read the Beatitudes in Luke 6 antiphonally, with one side reading the blessings and one side reading the woes.

Dramatic Reading: Invite three students to read the handout, "Savage Inequalities." One student will read Luis' lines, another will read Jonathan Kozol's, and the third will read Jezebel's.

Explore the Message (20 minutes)

Large Group Discussion: Ask the students to share their responses to the Beatitudes. What does it mean that the poor are blessed? Does it mean that God wants people who are poor to remain that way? What does it mean to say woe to the rich? Does it mean that God wants bad things to happen to those who have lots of money? Get the students' responses.

Make sure the discussion includes the ideas that God's special concern for and constant presence is with those who are in the most difficult circumstances. It doesn't mean that God wants people to be or remain in painful, difficult circumstances. The woes suggest the limited nature of those kinds of satisfactions, if one is only concerned about his or her own well-being. The woes don't mean that God is "out to get" those who are advantaged, but that we will find more woe than blessing if our priority is on selfish satisfactions that cannot provide a lasting experience of blessing. To share God's concern would be to side with those who are most disadvantaged.

Ask the students how they relate the reading from *Savage Inequalities* to the Beatitudes.

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Small Group Brainstorming: Divide the group into two. Have one group brainstorm a list of the things that make it easier to learn (such as parents who expect the best from you, schools with caring teachers, friends who also value learning, and adequate books and equipment in the school). Have the second small group brainstorm a list of the things that make it more difficult to learn (such as a lack of books and other materials, peer pressure not to "act smart," and teachers who don't expect you to do well). Have each group record its ideas on butcher paper. After ten minutes, have them come back together. Have one person from each small group share the ideas aloud.

Respond to the Message (20 minutes)

Ask the class, when they think about the Beatitudes, and about the *Savage Inequalities* description of advantaged schools and disadvantaged schools, what do they think is a faithful response that reflects God's concern?

Give the students copies of the handout, "Students with Smart Solutions." Invite several students to read the stories aloud.

Have the students list the things that they think were keys to success in each of the stories.

Have the class come up with a list of actions they could take to help all schools be good places for students to learn. Have them decide if there is one of these actions that they will commit to taking, and determine the steps necessary to get started.

Closing (10 minutes)

Lead the students in a collaborative project of writing a modern version of the Beatitudes based on the class today. Once it has been created and written out on butcher paper, have the class read it aloud together. For example, lines might read:

"Blessed are the students who face the greatest learning challenges, for they will discover determination, persistence, and resourcefulness."

"Blessed are those who work to improve the quality of the poorest schools, for they will discover the rich satisfaction of fulfilling God's call to justice."

"Woe to those who hoard all of the resources for wealthy schools, for their grasping will leave them without the things that really matter: compassion, generosity, and fairness."

"Woe to those who view rich kids or white kids or able-bodied kids as the only ones who can learn at the highest levels, for they will miss seeing some of the brightest kids with great ideas."

Christian Worship and Education Resources

Savage Inequalities

The following passage is from Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools. *It relates a conversation between the author, Jonathan Kozol, and a group of students from a public high school in Camden, New Jersey.*

An eleventh grader named Luis tells me that he went to a private school before he came to Woodrow Wilson High.

"If you ask me how it's different, I begin to think of books, or air conditioners, or computers. But it isn't one thing. It's a lot of things: the whole effect. The teachers at that school, they had a comfortable lounge. You go in there, with their permission, if you want to sit and get to know your teacher. The students also have a lounge. It isn't concentrated. It's relaxed. You drive up a slope. The school is on a hill. You go up the driveway and it's circular and like the entrance to a college campus or a nice hotel. The school is brick. A real nice-lookin' school. There is a lacrosse field. When you go to lunch you go together, not in shifts, and it's a pleasant place for lunch. My class had 15 students. And the teachers help you during class. They have the time, you know, to make sure that you understand....

"In this school [Woodrow Wilson High], they sometimes do not have the time. You know: They Xerox something. Here, do this. Just hand it out. This is your work. Just do it. Get it in before the end of class. You'll get a grade. And, you know, it does take time for kids to understand. And some kids, when they don't understand they feel embarrassed. You don't want to be the only one to raise your hand and sayin' you don't understand. You sit there and say nothin'. If the teacher has the time to come around and talk to you, it's different. You're not scared to say to him, 'I didn't understand. I didn't get it.' And he helps you. And you're willing to come early on the next day and be helped some more. And, in this way, you're really learnin'."

I ask them: "If you had the things here that you want: new books, more computers, air conditioning, all of that, it would take a lot of money. Money has to come from taxes. Where would that money and those taxes come from?"

"If there's a surplus, say, in Cherry Hill [a nearby, wealthy town]," Luis replies, "well, you could divide that money."

"Let's say that you have $10,000," Jezebel says. "Split that sum in half: $5,000 for Cherry Hill, $5,000 for Camden [their own city, with lower incomes.]"

Luis: "Make it equal. I don't mean that you should make it worse for them. They have the right to education. But we need our education too. Make it equal. Even if you have to take funds from somewhere else...."

I ask him this: "If they raise more money from their taxes out in Cherry Hill, don't they have the right to keep that money there and use it to buy things that they may want for their own school?"

"What could they possibly want," says Jezebel, "that they don't have?"

Students with Smart Solutions

Building Student Activism

Student Council President Trent Norris learned from his classmate Fran, a student representative to the school board, that there was a proposal to build a new gymnasium and library at the high school. This was to replace the cramped, aging, and inadequate ones the students currently had to use. The funding for the building project would be raised through bonds issued by the school district.

For all of this to go forward, a bond referendum would have to pass in the upcoming election. Because it was an "off year" in the election cycle (with no candidates running for major offices), a low voter turn-out was expected. The school board was worried that the bond referendum would be defeated.

So, Trent decided to get the students into action. First, he had to let the students know what was at stake. Of course, most students weren't reading notices about school board meetings or upcoming elections. Trent told the student council about the bond referendum to approve and fund the new gym and library, and the student council members spread the word from there.

Just letting the students know about the referendum wasn't enough. Trent knew that the students had to find a way to make their priorities known and to help pass the referendum. For starters, the students could educate their parents about the issue and urge them to vote for the referendum.

But the student council took it one step further. They launched a campaign to get all of the high school students who would be eighteen years old on election day registered to vote. They even arranged to have real voting booths at the high school so the students could learn how to use them.

Election day came, and many more parents than usual turned out to vote. There was also a turnout of the town's newest voters: the high school seniors from Trent's school. At the end of the night, when the votes were counted, the referendum had passed. It would raise the largest amount of money in the school district's history.

Today, Trent is a lawyer living in California. But back in New Jersey at his former school, students are poring over books in a more spacious library while others are shooting hoops in a large, well-equipped gym. All because Trent Norris and the students at his school decided to get involved. And so can you!

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Continued from page 71

The following article is from the Boston Globe; 9/17/98 by Beth Daley, Globe Staff

Students persuade T to change policy

Long before her after-school research at the Boston Public Library was complete, high school student Anita George last year had to scramble to catch the T [subway or metro] home before 6 p.m., the deadline for using her free MBTA (Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority) student pass.

Fed up with having to cut research short to save the bus or train fare to get home, she and scores of other teens from the Boston Youth Organizing Project decided last spring to track down whoever decided on the 6 p.m. T-pass deadline and ask for an extension. After a summer of surveying other students, interviewing MBTA and school officials, typing agendas, and practicing their questions, the students went before MBTA General Manager Robert Prince last month and to their huge surprise won. Prince was so impressed with the students and their arguments, he extended student T pass times until 8 p.m. on the spot. About 19,000 Boston youths get free T passes each month, first subsidized by the MBTA and then paid for by the students' schools. The cost for the extra two hours, estimated at thousands of dollars annually, will be absorbed by the MBTA.

"We were expecting lots of answers and practiced for all of them except the answer—Yes," said David E. Walters, 18, of Dorchester, a senior at Another Course to College, an alternative Boston public school that George, 16, also attends.

"I know now that we have the ability to do anything. We don't have to rely on adults," said George of Dorchester.

Still, wading through Boston's arguably two most notorious bureaucracies took a summer of patience and dedication. The students got conflicting answers about who was in charge of the student pass regulations, and had to overcome adults who discouraged them from seeking the extension.

But the teens continued, sparked by their success last year in lobbying the city to use the Mel[illegible] Cass skating rink for in-line skating.

The Boston Youth Organizing Project, funded with roughly $50,000 a year by the City Mission Society, the mission arm of the United Church of Christ, is run out of a rectory in Grove Hall by Liz Steinhauser. While she guides the teens at the outset, she tends to "sit in a corner and say nothing" during organizational meetings, Walters said.

For the T project, about six students began interviewing MBTA and school officials. Some were paid for their work, and others volunteered. For each interview, the students appointed a leader, wrote an agenda and questions, and met with each official for 30 minutes.

The students discovered that "the legislation that formed the MBTA in the 1960s said there should be reduced fare for students for school and school-related activities," said Jameela Philip, 15, a student at Boston Latin Academy.

The officials, especially Prince, were impressed.

"I was bowled over," he said. "The level of bureaucracy they went through to get to my desk was amazing. They were serious and conducted a perfectly held business meeting."

Students felt the 6 p.m. deadline was unrealistic for those in sports or those who do after-school work.

Today, the students will hold a press conference on their efforts. The walls of their headquarters are dotted with sheets of papers with questions people might ask, and things the group wants to say. The students are gearing up to meet yet again to decide on their next project.

"Once you want to reach your goal or change something, you can do it," said Renee Philip, a 10th-grader at West Roxbury High. "With different young people's help, you can get anything done."

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Lesson Plan for Adults

Title Stumbling Blocks

Scripture Matthew 18:1-7

Theme Jesus warns us to remove stumbling blocks from before our children: today, inadequate health care and child care, poor education, poverty, violence, and lack of moral grounding threaten to trip up our children and prevent them from being ready to learn and succeed.

Lesson Objectives

Participants will:

- engage with a biblical text and uncover its meaning.
- explore the applications of the text's meaning for today, looking at the child care, health care, education, safety, and other needs that hinder children from being ready to learn and succeed.
- make commitments to action in response to the lesson.

Overview

Part I: Introduction and engagement with the text (introduction, prayer, reading of text, discussion of questions).

Part II: Application of the text (small group discussion of stories, large group sharing).

Part III: Commitment and closing (Act of commitment and closing prayer).

Materials

Rocks and basket or box to hold them; cross and small table to put it on; flip chart and markers; hand-outs (one of each per class member); Bible.

Preparation

- Familiarize yourself with the lesson plan.
- Gather rocks (perhaps fist-sized or smaller), at least one per class member. If your class is small, make sure that you have at least 20 stones.
- Place the cross on a small table.
- Prepare two pieces of flip chart paper with the following headings: *Stumbling Blocks* and *What We Can Do to Remove Them.*
- Make copies of the two hand-outs (on pages 75-77), one per class member.

Part I: Introduction and engagement with the text

1. Tell participants that today, in observance of the Children's Sabbath, the class will focus on the theme of getting children ready to learn, succeed, and achieve their God-given potential. They will discuss some of the "stumbling blocks" that hinder children and ways of removing the obstacles.

2. Then, open with the following prayer or one of your own:

Gracious God, you teach us what is right and good and true. In this time together, and in all our days, help us to discern your will for the children, and help us to fulfill your teaching. Amen.

3. Invite a class member to read the day's text, Matthew 18:1-7.

4. Raise the following questions for class members' response. Teaching notes and background information are provided in brackets and italicized. Feel free to introduce this information if it would be useful, but do not regard it as "the answers." Be genuinely open to the discoveries and contributions of class members.

What do you think Jesus meant by "becoming like children?" *(Children were utterly without status or power at that time. To become like a child would be to humble oneself completely, let go of illusions of self-importance and self-reliance, and discover one's radical dependence on God. Inclusion in God's family is not a function of high status or earning one's way in; it means accepting God's grace as a gift.)*

What are ways that Jesus might have expected the disciples to "welcome one such child?" Do you think that would include any or all of the following: inclusion in the faith community, protection, providing food, clothing, or other survival necessities, teaching, nurture, loving relationship? *(To help them draw some conclusions, encourage class members to think of*

other teachings and actions of Jesus, such as Matthew 25, "when did we see you naked, and clothe you. . ," the blessing of the children, the feeding of the multitude, and the raising of Jairus' daughter.)

How would you characterize Jesus' tone and message in verses 6-7? What connection or contrast do you see between it and the preceding verses? *(A drive for power and status can lead to disregard for the youngest and weakest members of the community. Both sections emphasize the importance and priority of the "little ones" whether those are young children or people who are young in their faith.)*

What are the stumbling blocks that Jesus may have been talking about?

How would you summarize the teaching in both verses, in your own words?

What do you think is the relevance of Jesus' teaching to children today, and their treatment by individuals, our congregation, community, state, and nation? How are we called to welcome children? What are the stumbling blocks before them? How or where might we experience woe if we fail to remove them?

Part II: Application of the text

1. If your class has at least six members, divide the class into small groups and assign each group one of the stories from *Savage Inequalities* and *Poverty Matters* on the handout, "Stumbling Blocks." (If your class has fewer members, you may review the stories together as one large group.) Ask them to identify the stumbling blocks in each child's life that threaten to hinder his or her readiness to learn and succeed. After 10 minutes, invite the groups to come back together. Ask each group in turn to list the stumbling blocks they identified. List these on the large piece of flip chart paper headed "Stumbling Blocks." If one small group repeats the same stumbling block as another, put a check by the item previously recorded.

As each "stumbling block" is identified, have a different class member pick up a rock from the box or basket. Have them place the rocks next to the cross you have placed on the table. By the end of the brainstorming, there should be a pile of rocks surrounding the cross. *(Keep a tally of the number of stumbling blocks identified. Make sure that at least as many are identified and rocks placed around the cross as there are class members.)*

2. Distribute the handout titled "Every Child." Invite different class members to read each paragraph addressing the following topics: health, child care, after-school time, poverty, and moral grounding. Invite discussion. How do participants see these concerns manifested in their community? In the state? In the nation?

3. Invite participants to brainstorm ways the church and individuals within it could respond to these problems and work for solutions. List ideas on the flip chart paper titled "What We Can Do To Respond."

Part III: Commitment and Closing

1. Invite each class member to take five minutes in prayer to consider how they will be involved in removing a stumbling block to children's learning, success, and achievement of their God-given potential. After five minutes, invite the class members, one by one, to remove a rock from around the cross and to say aloud the action they will take to help remove a stumbling block and get children ready to learn and succeed. (Some rocks will most likely remain.) Once everyone has a rock, encourage them to keep it as a reminder of the commitment they have made.

2. End with this prayer or one of your own: *Gracious God, through Jesus you have warned us to remove stumbling blocks from before our children and called us to welcome each child. We pray for your strength and guidance as we seek to remove those stumbling blocks.* (If extra rocks remain around the cross, add: *We know that there are more obstacles than we can manage alone, and so we pray that you will help us to find others to join us in this work.*) *We pray these things as your children whom you have so graciously welcomed. Amen.*

Stumbling Blocks

Story 1 from *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* by Jonathan Kozol

What are some stumbling blocks to children's preparation to learn, succeed, and achieve their God-given potential? Who or what put them there? Who can help remove them and how? What would Jesus say? What would Jesus have us do?

"How frustrating it is," the principal of a school in our nation's capital says to Jonathan Kozol, a writer, "to see so many children going hungry. On Fridays in the cafeteria I see small children putting chicken nuggets in their pockets. They're afraid of being hungry on the weekend."

A teacher looks out at her class. "These children don't smile. Why should they learn when their lives are so hard and so unhappy?"

Seven children meet me in the basement cafeteria. The flood that brought the rats is gone, but other floods have streaked the tiles in the ceiling.

The school is on a road that runs past several boarded buildings. Gregory tells me they are called "pipe" houses. "Go by there one day—it be vacant. Next day, they bring sofas, chairs. Day after that, you see the junkies going in."

I ask the children what they'd do to get rid of the drugs.

"Get the New Yorkers off our streets," Octavia says. "They come here from New York, perturbed, and sell our children drugs."

"Children working for the dealers," Gregory explains.

A teacher sitting with us says, "At eight years old, some of the boys are running drugs and holding money for dealers. By 28, they're going to be dead."

Tumisia: "It makes me sad to see black people kill black people."

"Four years from now," the principal says when we sit down to talk after the close of school, "one third of the little girls in this fifth grade are going to be pregnant."

I look into the faces of these children. At this moment they seem full of hope and innocence and expectation. The little girls have tiny voices and they squirm about on little chairs and lean way forward with their elbows on the table and their noses just above the table's surface and make faces at each other and seem mischievous and wise and beautiful. Two years from now, in junior high, there may be more toughness in their eyes, a look of lessened expectations and increasing cynicism. By the time they are 14, a certain rawness and vulgarity may have set in. Many will be hostile and embittered by that time. Others will coarsen, partly the result of diet, partly self-neglect and self-dislike. Visitors who meet such girls in elementary school feel tenderness; by junior high, they feel more pity or alarm.

But today, in Anacostia, the children are young and whimsical and playful. If you hadn't worked with kids like these for 20 years, you would have no reason to feel sad. You'd think, "They have the world before them."

"The little ones come into school on Monday," says the teacher, "and they're hungry. A five-year-old. Her laces are undone. She says, 'I had to dress myself this morning.' I ask her why. She says, 'They took my mother off to jail.' Their stomachs hurt. They don't know why. We feed them something hot because they're hungry."

I ask the children if they go to church. Most of them say they do. I ask them how they think of God.

"He has a face like ours," Octavia says.

A white face or a black face?

"Mexican," she says.

Tumisia: "I don't know the answer to that question."

"When you go to God," says Gregory, "He'll remind you of everything you did. He adds it up. If you were good, you go to Heaven. If you were selfish, then He makes you stand and wait awhile over there. Sometimes you get a second chance. You need to wait and see."

continued on page 76

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What are some stumbling blocks to children preparing to learn, succeed, and achieve their God-given potential? Who or what put them there? Who can help remove them? What would Jesus have us do?

from *Poverty Matters: The Cost of Child Poverty in America*

Story 2

In *Poverty Matters*, Charles Kinard, MSW and ABD, with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families describes his childhood this way:

It was hard to focus on school when you were worrying about survival—things like how to get home from school safely and how we were going to eat that night. In high school, I was a D student. I grew up in the projects, sharing my bedroom with two older sisters, with plenty of crime and poverty around us.

I had to work starting when I was 10. My whole life focus was not on learning; it was on staying alive. I had two or three odd jobs, from cutting grass to working in a janitorial service. That was not for saving for a bicycle but to help to pay for rent and food. The bills don't stop coming in because you're poor; they have to get paid. I couldn't sit back and complain.

But having to get up the next morning to go to school was hard. Athletics really saved me. Before the ninth grade I had to work multiple jobs. Then in the ninth grade my older sister got a job in a textile factory. That money let me have just one job after school, instead of two or three. That let me start playing sports, which I was never able to play before.

My grades didn't get better, but at least I had something that kept me coming to school. I didn't learn how to study because school wasn't as important as survival. Also being in remedial classes and low-level special-ed classes made it hard. Still, I showed I had talent in class and in sports. I went to Hampton University on a full athletic scholarship. It took me well into my junior year of college to realize I was finally in a nurturing environment, where it wasn't about survival. Where I could find material that related to my life and described people who look like me, an African American. Where I could focus on my studies.

And I began to get all A's.

Story 3

In 1983, Mary Tamper's middle-income world came tumbling down when her husband, William, died of leukemia, leaving Mary struggling to support her young son, Justin, on a meager salary from her job as a teacher's aide.

In the following months, Mary was sick frequently. In addition, she found out she was pregnant with twins. One of the twins died in utero, a result of the strains on Mary, according to the doctors. The other contracted bacterial meningitis soon after birth. The medical bills for Mary's and the baby's illnesses, food, and housing expenses soon depleted the family's savings. Desperate, Mary turned to public safety net programs to supplement her small earnings. She was approved for WIC (the federal special supplemental food and nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children), $770 a month in Social Security survivors benefits, and a tiny $121 monthly food stamp allowance. But she was denied welfare and Medicaid because her income, low as it was, put her above the eligibility threshold.

By early 1986, the family was living on the edge, stretching to make ends meet on $165 a month after paying the rent. "There were times when money ran short and we had no food," says Mary. WIC helped but was not enough. "There were...times when my son would say, 'Mom, I know you just fed me, but I'm still hungry.' That hurt me more than any knife or sword could because there was no food in the cupboard to feed him." By 1990, there was a little more money to go around. The family's Social Security benefits had been raised to about $900 a month, and the rent burden of the family was lower, thanks to a government housing subsidy. Still, Mary and the boys are nowhere near having financial security.

Looking back, Mary says, "Has hunger hurt my boys? Yes." Justin, the older son, is slower to learn in school and not as easy-going as most other children—a result, Mary feels, of inadequate nutrition and the strains of growing up poor.

(From Mary Tamper's testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget, February 1990.)

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Every Child

Until every child goes to school every day ready to learn and ready to succeed, America's promise will never be realized.

Until every child receives the health care, early educational experiences, standard of living, and family and community supports necessary for school readiness, America's future will be jeopardized.

Until every child is valued, held to high standards, and expected to achieve, this generation's moral legacy will be compromised.

Every child: Ready to Learn, Ready to Succeed!

What does it mean for every child to go to school ready to learn and succeed? It takes:

- Signing children up for health insurance under the new state Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Children who cannot see the blackboard, cannot hear the teacher, or are distracted by pain cannot learn to the best of their ability. Through CHIP, many of America's 11.6 million uninsured children have a new opportunity to maximize their potential in school. (Call 1800-CDF-1200, #2 for more information.)
- Providing affordable, quality child care for preschoolers whose parents are employed through substantial new investments, because only with the proper stimulation, nurture, and early education can young children's brains develop sufficiently to enable them to enter school ready to succeed.
- Ensuring safe, productive after-school activities for school-age children, because the five million young people who are unsupervised in the later afternoon are at risk for smoking, drinking, drug abuse, too-early sexual activity, and even crime and violence. All of these dangerous behaviors impair a child's ability to succeed in school—and in life. Tripling the federal investment in after-school programs, as President Clinton has proposed, will go a long way toward helping these children.
- Developing new initiatives to assist low-income families, because the harmful effects of poverty on a child's ability to learn and develop can be irreversible. Children who are not properly fed, clothed, or housed too often lag behind in school. Creating new opportunities for financial independence and raising living standards—for working families as well as those receiving assistance—are essential to our children's education.
- Reforming education to benefit our children. It is long past time for America to teach our children based on the premise that every child can perform at high levels—and to provide the right supports and expectations both in and out of school. Our entire educational system—from the superintendents and school boards to teachers—must be singularly focused on helping all children learn to the best of their ability.
- Connecting all children to caring adults, in their family, congregation, and community, who will help them develop strong moral grounding, know their intrinsic value, set their sights high, and make wise decisions that foster a successful future.

Section 5

Jewish Shabbat and Education Resources

This section provides suggestions for the services, passages and music related to the Children's Shabbat theme, an Erev Shabbat service, and a sample sermon. It also provides lesson plans for all ages.

Suggestions for the Services

Services on the Children's Shabbat are an excellent opportunity to help focus the congregation on the links between biblical texts, Jewish traditions, and advocating for children. They also serve as an opportune moment to affirm the good work of your congregation's care of children and to challenge members to continue to respond to the needs of children locally and nationally.

The following suggestions will assist you in planning your own unique Children's Shabbat service or supplementing your congregation's weekly prayer and discussions.

- **Involve the children and youths in the service.**
- **Focus the sermon, D'var Torah, or Torah discussion on children, school readiness, and our responsibility to help all children learn and succeed.** Use the following sample sermon or textual passages to help you.
- **Invite a professional from a local child care center, Head Start program, school, or after-school program to give the sermon.**
- **Honor congregation members who are child care providers, Head Start teachers, or school teachers.** Ask them to lead certain prayers or give them Aliyot during the Torah reading.
- **Collect tzedakah to benefit a school or a child care, Head Start, or after-school program.**

Passages from the Torah, Prophets, and Talmud

On the Importance of Children

And Israel beheld Joseph's sons and said, "Whose are these?" And Joseph said to his father, "These are my children, whom the Lord has given me in this place." And he said, "Bring them to me, and I will bless them."

Genesis 48:8-9

Thus said the Eternal: A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing, bitter weeping: Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone. Thus said the Eternal: Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from shedding tears; for there is reward in your labor—declares the Eternal. They shall return from the enemy's land, and there is hope for your future—declares the Eternal: and your children shall return to their country.

Jeremiah 31:15-17

When the children are blessed, the parents by this very token are blessed.

Zohar, v. 227b

The accursed Emperor Hadrian was once walking along the road to Tiberias when he saw an old man standing and cutting down shrubs in order to plant saplings. He said to him, "Old man! Old man! What is your age?" He answered, "One hundred." "You are

one hundred years old and you stand here cutting down trees in order to plant saplings? Do you think you will eat of their fruits?" He replied, "If I am worthy, I shall eat: if not, just as my parents toiled for me, so shall I toil for my children."

Kohellet Rabbia

Rabbi Meir said: When the Israelites came to receive the Torah, God said to them, "Bring me good sureties that you will observe it." They answered, "Our ancestors shall be our sureties." God replied, "Your sureties need sureties themselves. I have found fault with them." They answered, "Our prophets shall be our sureties." God replied, "I have found fault with them also." Then the Israelites said, "Our children will be our sureties." They proved acceptable, and God gave Israel the Torah.

Shir Hashirim Rabbah

On the Importance of Education

"At the age of five, (one is ripe) for Bible; at ten for Mishnah; at thirteen, for mitzvoth; at fifteen, for Talmud; at eighteen for the marriage canopy; at twenty for pursuit; at thirty, for vigor; at forty, for understanding; at fifty for counsel; at sixty, to be an elder; at seventy, for grey hair; at eighty, for strength; at ninety, to bend over; at one hundred, as if he had died and passed away and disappeared from the world."

BT Sukkah 19b

Rabbi Hamnuna said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because the children did not attend school, and loitered in the streets.

Pesikta Rabbati 26b

The flowers (of the great menorah of the Sanctuary): These are the children who learn in school.

Sanhedrin Rabbia 3.1

"They that are planted in the house of the Lord," (Psalm 92:13). Rabbi Hanan ben Pazzi taught: "While they are yet saplings, they are in the house of the Lord; these are the children who are in school."

BT Baba Batra 21a

Raba said: The number of students for one teacher should be twenty-five. If there are fifty students, they appoint two; if there are forty, they appoint an assistant, who is supported by the funds of the town.

BT Ta'anit 24a

Rav once came to a certain town and ordered the people to fast and pray in order to bring down rain. But no rain fell.

The Reader of the congregation then went before the Ark and recited the words from the prayer book, "God who causes the wind to blow," and immediately the wind began to blow. He then recited, "God who causes the rain to fall," and rain began to fall.

Rav asked him, "What special deed have you done to merit such reward?"

The Reader answered, "I teach young children, those of the poor as well as those of the rich. I take no fees from anyone who cannot afford to pay. Also, I have a fish pond, and if a child does not want to study, I give him some fishes to keep and win him over in that way so that soon he becomes eager to learn. In his day, if one had a learned father, the father would teach, and if not, one did not learn. Then they instituted a publicly funded school in Jerusalem. But those with parents were brought up to Jerusalem, and those without still did not learn. They then set up a school in each district, and the children were to enter at 16 or 17, but when the teachers tried to discipline them, they rebelled and left. They then instituted publicly funded schools for any child six or older. And if there was a long way, or a bridge to cross, they could compel the town to build another school."

BT Baba Batra 21a

On Social Justice

Speak up for [those unable to speak], for the rights of all the unfortunate. Speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and needy.

Proverbs 31: 8-9

And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the result of righteousness shall be quietness and confidence forever.

Isaiah 32:17

Suggested Music for the Erev Shabbat Service

"And the Youth Shall See Visions" by Debbie Friedman. Contact Sounds Write Productions, Inc., San Diego, CA., or call 619-697-6120.

The following suggestions appear in *Shireinu: Our Songs*, available from Transcontinental Music Publications by calling 1-800-455-5223.

- "Ani V'Atah" by Arik Einstein
- "Kaddish D'Rabbanan" by Debbie Friedman
- "Hineh Mah Tov," a traditional folk song
- "The Dreamer" by Lorre Wyatt

An Erev Shabbat Service

Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed

Friday, October 15, 1999

Rabbi Marc Israel
Director of Congregational Relations
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Washington, D.C.

The 1999 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths takes place this year on Parashat Noach. Portions of the following service pertain to the story of Noah. If your congregation holds its Children's Shabbat at another time of the year, remember to substitute materials relevant to that week's Torah portion. Add music wherever you deem appropriate.

Opening

Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Chanina: The students of the wise increase peace in the world, as it says, "And all your children (banayich) will be taught of the Eternal and great shall be the peace of your children (banayich). Do not read banayich (your children) but bonayich (your builders)."

Berachot 64a

Our children may be the builders of the world but we are entrusted to be the builders of our children. We are not alone. There are friends and family; child care providers and coaches; teachers and mentors, all of whom join us in raising our children. Children reflect the lessons they learn from each of us.

Tonight we give thanks to all those who dedicate themselves to serving our children. They are the bonim (builders) of our banim (children). As we are grateful for the work they do, so too, we promise to work toward a day when all children shall have access to the provisions they need to grow and become healthy, happy children of God.

Candle Lighting

הדלקת נרות שבת

Hadlakat Neirot Shabbat

As the great doors of night are opening we come into the clean, quiet room of Shabbat.

Let us be thankful as we light these candles like eyes of holiness on this moment of peace.

Let us savor the fruit of the vine, the blood of the earth that quickens us.

Let us be thankful for grain, fruit of grasses that feed the cow, the gazelle, and us.

Let us be grateful for the children and the work of the week that are our own fruitfulness.

Let us as we eat never forget that food comes from the earth. We must cherish and heal through labor, we must respect and reward.

By Marge Piercy from *Kol Haneshamah, Shabbat Vehagim*. Reprinted with permission of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu melech ha'olam asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu lehadlik ner shel shabbat.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe. You hallow us with Your Mitzvot, and command us to kindle the lights of Shabbat.

Lecha Dodi לכה דודי

Traditionally, during the last verse of "Lecha Dodi," the congregation turns around and faces the door to welcome the Shabbat spirit into the room. Tonight, as we join with congregations throughout the nation celebrating the 1999 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, let us also turn and symbolically welcome all of those who dedicate themselves to teaching our nation's children.

בּוֹאִי בְשָׁלוֹם עֲטֶרֶת בַּעְלָהּ. גַּם בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְצָהֳלָה.
תּוֹךְ אֱמוּנֵי עַם סְגֻלָּה. בּוֹאִי כַלָּה, בּוֹאִי כַלָּה: לכה

Bo-i v'sha-lom, a-teh-ret ba-a'lah, gam b'sim-chah u-v'tsa-ho-la.
Toch eh-mu-nei am s'gu-la, bo-i cha-la! Bo-i cha-la!

L'cha do-di

Enter in peace, O crown of your husband; enter in gladness, enter in joy. Come to the people that keeps its faith. Enter, O bride! Enter, O bride!

Beloved

Chatzi Kaddish חצי קדיש

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא. בְּעָלְמָא דִי בְרָא כִרְעוּתֵהּ, וְיַמְלִיךְ
מַלְכוּתֵהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. בַּעֲגָלָא
וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא:

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאַר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדַּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה
וְיִתְהַלַּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא לְעֵלָּא (בעשי״ת וּלְעֵלָּא מִכָּל)
מִן כָּל בִּרְכָתָא, וְשִׁירָתָא, תֻּשְׁבְּחָתָא וְנֶחֱמָתָא, דַּאֲמִירָן בְּעָלְמָא,
וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:

Yit-ga-dal v'yit-ka-dash sh-mei ra-ba b'al-ma di-v'ra chi-r'u-tei, v'yam-lich mal-chu-tei b'cha-yei-chon u-v'-yo-mei-chon u-v'cha-yei d'chol beit Yis-ra-eil, ba-a-ga-la u-viz'man ka-riv, v'i-m'ru A-mein.

Y'hei sh'mei ra-ba m'va-rach l'a-lam u-l'al-mei al-ma-ya

Yit-ba-rach v'yish-ta-bach v'yit-pa-ar, v'yit-ro-mam, v'yit-na-se, v'yit-ha-dar, v'hit-a-leh, v'yit-ha-lal sh'mei d'kud-sha, b'rich hu, l'ei-la min kol bir-cha-ta v'shi-ra-ta, tush-b'cha-ta v'ne-che-ma-ta da-a-mi-ran b'al-ma, v'i-m'ru A-mein.

Let the glory of God be extolled, and God's great name be hallowed in the world whose creation God willed. May God rule in our own day, in our own lives, and in the life of all Israel, and let us say: Amen.

Let God's great name be blessed for ever and ever

Beyond all the praises, songs, and adorations that we can utter is the Holy One, the Blessed One, who yet we glorify, honor and exalt. And let us say: Amen.

לְכָה דוֹדִי לִקְרַאת כַּלָּה. פְּנֵי שַׁבָּת נְקַבְּלָה:

L'cha do-di lik-rat ka-la, p'nei Shabbat n'ka-b'la.
L'cha do-di lik-rat ka-la, p'nei Shabbat n'ka-b'la.

Beloved, come to meet the bride; beloved, come to greet Shabbat.
Beloved, come to meet the bride; beloved, come to greet Shabbat.

שָׁמוֹר וְזָכוֹר בְּדִבּוּר אֶחָד, הִשְׁמִיעָנוּ אֵל הַמְיֻחָד.
יְיָ אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד. לְשֵׁם וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת וְלִתְהִלָּה: לכה

Sha-mor v'za-chor b'dibur eh-chad, hish mi-anu
Eil ha-m'yu-chad,

Adonai eh-chad, u'sh-mo eh-chad, l'sheim u-l'tif-eh'ret
v'li-t'hi-la.

L'cha do-di

Keep and Remember: a single command, the Only God caused us to hear; the Eternal is One, God's name is One, for honor and glory and praise.

Beloved

לִקְרַאת שַׁבָּת לְכוּ וְנֵלְכָה. כִּי הִיא מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה.
מֵרֹאשׁ מִקֶּדֶם נְסוּכָה. סוֹף מַעֲשֶׂה בְּמַחֲשָׁבָה תְּחִלָּה: לכה

Lik-rat Shabbat l'chu v'nei-l'cha, ki hi m'kor ha'b'ra-cha.

Mei-rosh mi-keh-dem n'su-cha, sof ma-a-seh b'ma-cha-sha-va t'chi-la.

L'cha do-di

Come with me to meet Shabbat, forever a fountain of blessing.
Still it flows, as from the start: the last of days, for which the first was made.

Beloved

הִתְעוֹרְרִי הִתְעוֹרְרִי. כִּי בָא אוֹרֵךְ קוּמִי אוֹרִי.
עוּרִי עוּרִי שִׁיר דַּבְּרִי. כְּבוֹד יְיָ עָלַיִךְ נִגְלָה: לכה

Hit-o-r'ri, hit-o-r'ri, ki va o-reich! Ku-mi o-ri,
u-ri u-ri, shir da-bei-ri, k'vod Adonai a-la-yich nig-la.

L'cha do-di

Awake, awake, your light has come! Arise, shine, awake, and sing, the Eternal's glory dawns upon you.

Beloved

Barechu

בָּרְכוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְבֹרָךְ׃

Barechu et Adonai hamvorach

Praise the Eternal, to whom all praise is due.

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד׃

Baruch Adonai hamvorach le'olam va'ed.

Praise the Eternal, to whom all praise is due now and forever.

Maariv Aravim

מעריב ערבים

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ , אלהינו מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בִּדְבָרוֹ מַעֲרִיב עֲרָבִים, בְּחָכְמָה פּוֹתֵחַ שְׁעָרִים, וּבִתְבוּנָה מְשַׁנֶּה עִתִּים, וּמַחֲלִיף אֶת הַזְּמַנִּים, וּמְסַדֵּר אֶת הַכּוֹכָבִים, בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם בָּרָקִיעַ כִּרְצוֹנוֹ. בורא יום וָלָיְלָה, גּוֹלֵל אוֹר מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ, וְחֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי אוֹר. וּמַעֲבִיר יוֹם וּמֵבִיא לָיְלָה, וּמַבְדִּיל בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לָיְלָה, יְיָ צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ. אֵל חַי וְקַיָּם, תָּמִיד יִמְלוֹךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, הַמַּעֲרִיב עֲרָבִים׃

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu melech ha-olam asher bi-d'varo ma-ariv aravim, b'chochma potey-ach sh'arim u-vitvuna m'shaneh itim, u-macha-lif et ha-z'manim u-m'sadeyr et ha-kochavim b'mish-m'ro-teyhem ba-rakia kir-tzono.Borey yom va-laila, goleyl or mipney cho-shech v'cho-shech mipney or.

U-ma-avir yom u-meyvi laila, u'mav'dil beyn yom u-veyn laila. Adonai tz'vaot sh'mo.
Eyl chai v'kayam tamid yimloch aleynu l'olam va-ed.
Baruch ata Adonai, ha-ma-ariv aravim.

Blessed are You, Eternal One our God, Sovereign of all worlds,
by whose word the evenings fall.
In wisdom You open heaven's gates.
With divine discernment You make seasons change,
causing the times to come and go, and ordering the stars on their appointed paths
through heaven's dome, all according to Your will.

Creator of the day and night, Who rolls back light before the dark, and dark before the light, Who makes day pass away and brings on night, dividing between day and night.

The Leader of the Throngs of Heaven is Your name!
Living and enduring God, rule over us, now and always.
Blessed are You, Almighty One, who makes the evenings fall.

Reflection

God of the generations, God of new beginnings, children are Your promise of tomorrow, made in Your image, a reflection of Your divine love. Teach us to raise our children worthy of this sacred trust of life. Sustain us and our children in health and love. We are thankful for the beauty of our lives and the ability to bring new life. We are thankful to all those who help us to raise our children in love.

Adapted from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association *Rabbi's Manual*
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Ahavat Olam

אהבת עולם

אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ אָהָבְתָּ, תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים, אוֹתָנוּ לִמַּדְתָּ עַל כֵּן יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בְּשָׁכְבֵנוּ וּבְקוּמֵנוּ נָשִׂיחַ בְּחֻקֶּיךָ, וְנִשְׂמַח בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. כִּי הֵם חַיֵּינוּ וְאֹרֶךְ יָמֵינוּ, וּבָהֶם נֶהְגֶּה יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה, וְאַהֲבָתְךָ אַל תָּסִיר מִמֶּנּוּ לְעוֹלָמִים. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

Ahavat olam beyt yisra'el amecha ahav'ta.
Torah u'mitzvot chukim u mishpatim otanu limad'ta.
Al ken Adonai Eloheynu besochbenu
u'v'kumenu nasiach be'chukecha
v'nishmach b'divrey toratecha
u'v'mitzvotecha le'olam va'ed ki hem chayeynu v'orech yameynu u'vahem nehgeh yomam valaylah
V'ahavatecha al tasir mimenu l'olamim
Baruch ata Adonai ohev amo Yisra'el.

Your everlasting love for the house of Israel.
Torah and mitzvot, laws and justice You have taught us.
And so, Dear One our God, when we lie down and when we rise up, we reflect upon Your laws.
We take pleasure in Your Torah's words and Your mitzvot, now and always.
Truly, they are our life, our length of days.
On them we meditate by day and night.
Your love will never depart from us as long as worlds endure.
Blessed are You, Beloved One, who loves Your people Israel.

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Responsive Reading

Leader: When Israel was about to receive Torah, the Holy One said to them, "I am about to give you my Torah. Bring me worthy guarantors to ensure that you will uphold it, and I will give it to you."

Congregation: They said, "Let our ancestors be our guarantors."

Leader: The Holy One replied, "I find many faults in your ancestors. Bring me better guarantors, and I will give it to you."

Congregation: They said, "Ruler of the Universe! Our prophets will be our guarantors."

Leader: Said the Holy One, "With your prophets I also find many faults. Bring me better guarantors, and I will give you My Torah."

Congregation: They said, "Our children will be our guarantors."

Leader: The Holy One replied, "Truly they are good guarantors. For their sake I will give you the Torah."

Congregation: Therefore, parents are required to introduce their child to the study of Torah and to provide good grounding in the ways of the House of Israel in order that the child may live long and well in the world.

Shir HaShirim Rabbah, Midrashic Commentary on Song of Songs

Sh'ma

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד׃

Sh'ma Yis-ra-eil, Adonai Eh-lo-hei-nu, Adonai Eh-chad!
Hear, O Israel, the Eternal One is our God, the Eternal God alone!

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד׃

Ba-ruch shem k'vod mal-chu-to l'o-lam va-ed!
Blessed is God's glorious majesty for ever and ever!

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ, וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ, וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ׃
וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם, עַל-לְבָבֶךָ׃
וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ, וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתֶךָ, וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ
וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ, וּבְקוּמֶךָ׃ וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדֶךָ, וְהָיוּ לְטֹטָפֹת בֵּין
עֵינֶיךָ, וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתֶךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ׃

לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתָי, וִהְיִיתֶם קְדֹשִׁים
לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם׃ אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם, לִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים, אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם׃

V'ahavta et Adonai Eh-lo-hei-cha b'chol l'va-v'cha
u-v'chol naf-sh'cha u-v'chol m'o-deh-cha.

V'hayu ha-d'va-rim ha-eileh asher a-no-chi
m'tza-v'cha ha-yom al l'va-veh-cha.

V'shi-nan-tam l'va-neh-cha v'di-bar-ta bam
b'shiv-t'cha b'vei-teh-cha u-v'lech-t'cha
va-deh-rech u-v'shoch-b'cha u-v'ku-meh-cha.

U-k'shar-tam l'ot al ya-deh-cha v'ha-yu l'to-fa-fot bein
ei-neh-cha. U-ch'tav-tam al m'zu-zot bei-teh-cha u-vi-sh'a-rei-cha.

L'ma-an tiz-k'ru va-a-sitem et kol mitz-vo-tai.
V'h'yitem k'do-shim lei-lo-hei-chem. Ani Adonai
Eh-lo-hei-chem asher hotzeiti et-chem m'eretz mitz-ra-yim
lih-yot lachem lei-lohim. Ani Adonai Eh-lo-hei-chem.

You shall love your Eternal God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your being. Set these words, which I command you this day, upon your heart.

Teach them faithfully to your children.

Speak of them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up.

Bind them as a sign upon your hand.

Let them be symbols before your eyes.
Inscribe them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates.

Be mindful of all My mitzvot, and do them,
so shall you consecrate yourselves to your God.
I am your Eternal God who led you out of Egypt
to be your God.
I am your Eternal God.

Reflection on the Sh'ma God Is with Us

Reader: You shall love the Eternal your God with all your mind, with all your strength, with all your being.

Response: The path to the love of God is through the love of others; I do not love God until I love my neighbor as myself.

Reader: Set these words which I command you this day, upon your heart. Jewish faith unites mind and heart.

Response: Even as my mind seeks to understand life's meaning, so may my life show love for all created things.

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Reader: Teach them faithfully to your children, speak of them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up.

Response: We do not teach our children by words alone. May I make my life and actions into good teachings, for in my conduct I must exemplify Torah.

Reader: Bind them as a sign upon your hand, let them be a symbol before your eyes; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates.

Response: Let my home glow with the beauty of our heritage. Let my doors be opened wide to wisdom and to righteousness.

Reader: Be mindful of all My Mitzvot and do them; so shall you consecrate yourselves to your God.

Response: Each Mitzvah is a way to holiness. The Mitzvot elevate our humanity. Let me learn to use them to magnify the divine in myself and in the world.

G'ulah Redemption

Leader: Those who raise children in their home are considered by scripture as the ones who gave birth to them.

Congregation: In loving and protecting them, those who raise them, bless them with the shelter of their deeds and their name. Call their name beloved, for they are our inheritors.

Leader: The ones who teach children Torah are considered as the ones who gave birth to them.

Congregation: Call their name beloved, for they are our inheritors. By them we have been blessed and upon their lives we have laid our blessing.

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Mi Chamocha

מִי כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם יְיָ,
מִי כָמֹכָה נֶאְדָּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ,
נוֹרָא תְהִלֹּת,עֹשֵׂה פֶלֶא׃

מַלְכוּתְךָ רָאוּ בָנֶיךָ,בּוֹקֵעַ יָם לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה, זֶה אֵלִי עָנוּ וְאָמְרוּ׃
יְיָ יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

וְנֶאֱמַר׃ כִּי פָדָה יְיָ אֶת יַעֲקֹב, וּגְאָלוֹ מִיַּד חָזָק מִמֶּנּוּ בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה
יְיָ, גָּאַל יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

Mi chamocha ba'eilim Adonai? Mi kamocha
ne'dar bakodesh
nora t'hilot osey feleh?
malchut'cha ra'u vanecha, boke'a yam lifnei
Moshe zeh Eli anu v'amru
Adonai yimloch l'olam va'ed.
V'ne-emar ki fadah Adonai et Ya'akov u'galo
miyad chazak mimenu.
Baruch atah Adonai ga'al Yisra'el.

Who is like You, Eternal One, among the gods that are worshipped?
Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?
In their escape from the sea, Your children saw Your sovereign might displayed.
"This is my God!" they cried. "The Eternal will reign for ever and ever!"
Now let all come to say:
The Eternal has redeemed Israel and all the oppressed.
Blessed is the Eternal God.

Hashkivenu Help Us

השכיבנו

הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם,וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ לְחַיִּים וּפְרוֹשׂ עָלֵינוּ סֻכַּת שְׁלוֹמֶךָ, וְתַקְּנֵנוּ בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, וְהָגֵן בַּעֲדֵנוּ, וְהָסֵר מֵעָלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב, דֶּבֶר, וְחֶרֶב, וְרָעָב וְיָגוֹן, וְהָסֵר שָׂטָן מִלְּפָנֵינוּ וּמֵאַחֲרֵנוּ, וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תַּסְתִּירֵנוּ כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמְרֵנוּ וּמַצִּילֵנוּ אָתָּה, כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם אָתָּה, וּשְׁמוֹר צֵאתֵנוּ וּבוֹאֵנוּ, לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם, מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. וּפְרוֹשׂ עָלֵינוּ סֻכַּת שְׁלוֹמֶךָ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, הַפּוֹרֵשׂ סֻכַּת שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלָיִם׃

Hash-kiveynu Adonai Eloheynu l'shalom
v'ha-amideynu malkeynu l'chayyim
U'fros aleynu sukat sh'lomecha. V'tak-neynu
b'eytzah tovah mil-fanecha
v'hoshi-eynu l'ma-an sh'mecha.
V'hagein ba-adeynu, v'ha-seyr mey-aleynu oyeiv,
dever, v'cherev, v'ra-av, v'yagon, v'ha-seyr satan
mil-fa-neynu umey-ach-reynu.
uv-tzeyl k'nafecha tas-tireynu ki Eyl shom-reynu
u'matzileynu ata, ki
Eyl melech chanun v'rachum atah.

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U'sh-mor tzey-teynu uvo-eynu l'chayyim
ul'shalom mey-ata v'ad olam.
Uf-ros aleynu sukat sh'lomecha.
Baruch ata Adonai, ha-poreys sukat shalom
aleynu v'al kol amo
Yisrael v'al Y'ru-shala-yim.

Help us to lie down, Dear One, our God, in peace, and let us rise again, our Sovereign, to life. Spread over us the shelter of Your peace. Decree for us a worthy daily lot, and redeem us for the sake of Your great name, and enfold us in the wings of Your protection, for You are our redeeming guardian. Truly, a sovereign, gracious, and compassionate God are You. Guard our going forth each day for life and peace, now and always. Spread over us the shelter of Your peace. Blessed are You, Compassionate One, who spreads Your canopy of peace over all Your people Israel and over Jerusalem.

Reflection

Anyone who teaches a child Torah does not teach that child only, but also the child's descendants and the descendants of the descendants and so on to the end of all generations.

Kiddushin 30a

V'shamru ושמרו

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת, לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם
בְּרִית עוֹלָם: בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הִיא לְעוֹלָם, כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת
יָמִים עָשָׂה יְיָ אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ, וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת
וַיִּנָּפַשׁ

V'shamru v'ney Yisrael et ha-shabbat, la-asot et
ha-shabbat l'dorotam b'rit olam.
Beyni uveyn b'ney yisrael ot hi l'olam ki shey-shet
yamim asa Adonai et ha-shamayim v'et
ha-aretz u'va-yom ha-sh'vi-i shavat va-yinafash.

Let Israel's descendants keep Shabbat, making Shabbat throughout all their generation, as an eternal bond. Between Me and Israel's descendants shall it be a sign eternally. For in six days the Fashioner of All made skies and earth, and on the seventh day God ceased and drew a breath of rest.

Amidah Standing in Prayer עמידה

Avot Ve'imot The Ancestors

אֲדֹנָי שְׂפָתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתֶךָ:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ,
אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרָה,
אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, אֱלֹהֵי רִבְקָה,
וֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, אֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה,
וֵאלֹהֵי רָחֵל,

הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֶלְיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים,
וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל, וְזוֹכֵר חַסְדֵי אָבוֹת וְאִמָּהוֹת, וּמֵבִיא גּוֹאֵל לִבְנֵי
בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה: מֶלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמָגֵן:
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מָגֵן אַבְרָהָם וְעֶזְרַת שָׂרָה:

Adonai, s'fatai tif-tach, u'fi yaggid t'hilatecha.

Baruch atah Adonai, Elohaynu vaylohei
avoteinu v'imoteinu
Elohay Avraham Elohay Sarah
Elohay Yitzchak Elohay Rivka
Elohay Yaakov Elohay Rachel
Vey-lohay Leah

Ha-eil ha-ga-dol ha-gibor v'ha-nora,
Eil elyon gomeil chasadim tovim,
v'koneh ha-kol, v'zocheir chasdei avot v'imot
v'mey-vi go-eil liv-nei v'nei-hem, l'ma-an sh'mo b'ahava.
Melech o-zeir u'mo-shi-a u'ma-gein.
Baruch ata Adonai, ma-gein Avraham v'ezrat Sarah.

Open my mouth, Beloved One, and let my mouth declare Your praise.

Blessed are You, the Ancient One, our God, God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, God of Sarah, God of Rebekah, God of Rachel, and God of Leah.

Great, heroic, awesome God, supreme Divinity, imparting deeds of lovingkindness. Begetter of all. Mindful of the loyalty of Israel's ancestors. Bringing, with love, redemption to their children's children, for the sake of the Divine Name. Regal One, our help, salvation and protector. Blessed are You, Kind One, the shield of Abraham and help of Sarah.

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Gevurot

גבורות

אַתָּה גִּבּוֹר לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנָי, מְחַיֵּה מֵתִים אַתָּה, רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ. מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחֶסֶד, מְחַיֵּה מֵתִים בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים, סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים, וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים, וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים, וּמְקַיֵּם אֱמוּנָתוֹ לִישֵׁנֵי עָפָר. מִי כָמוֹךָ בַּעַל גְּבוּרוֹת וּמִי דוֹמֶה לָךְ, מֶלֶךְ מֵמִית וּמְחַיֶּה וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה. וְנֶאֱמָן אַתָּה לְהַחֲיוֹת מֵתִים. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מְחַיֵּה הַמֵּתִים.

A-ta gi-bor l'o'lam, Adonai, m'cha-yei ba-kol a-ta, rav l'ho-shi-a. M'chal-keil cha-yim b'ches-sed, m'cha-yei ba-kol b'ra-cha-mim ra-bim. So-meich no-f'lim v'ro-fei cho-lim, u-ma tir a-su-rim, u-m'ka-yeim e-mu-na-to li-she-nei a-far. Mi cha-mo-cha ba-al g'vu-rot, u-mi do-meh lach, melech mei-mit u-m'cha-yeh u-matz-mi-ach y'shu-a?

V'neh-eh-man a-ta l'ha-cha-yot ba-kol. Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, m'cha-yei ba-kol.

Eternal is Your might, O God; all life is Your gift; great is Your power to save!
With love You sustain the living; with great compassion give life to all.
You send help to the falling and healing to the sick.
You bring freedom to the captive and keep faith with those who sleep in the dust.
Who is like You, Mighty One, Author of life and death, Source of salvation?
We praise You, O God, the Source of life.

Kedushah

קדושה

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ וּקְדוֹשִׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יְהַלְלוּךָ, סֶלָה. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, הָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ.

A-ta ka-dosh v'shim-cha kah-dosh u-k'do-shim b'chol yom y'hal-l'u-cha, selah. Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai ha-eil ha-ka-dosh.

You are holy, Your name is holy, and those who strive to be holy declare Your glory day by day.

A Blessing

May your eyes sparkle with the light of Torah,
And your ears hear the music of its words.
May the space between each letter of the scrolls
Bring warmth and comfort to your soul.
May the syllables draw holiness from your heart,
And may this holiness be gentle and soothing
To the world.

May your study be passionate,
And may meanings bear more meanings
Until life itself arrays itself to you
As a dazzling wedding feast.
And may your conversation
Be a blessing to all who listen to your words
And see the Torah glowing on your face.

(Hanoch Sneigel, from Unlocked Doors: The Selected Poems of Hanoch Sneigel. The Toledo House Press, 1987)

On Public Education

At first, if a child had a father, the father taught him; but if he had no father, he received no education.

Then it was decreed that teachers of children would be appointed in Jerusalem and fathers would take their sons to Jerusalem to be taught. But, again, fatherless children received no instruction.

Then it was resolved that teachers would be appointed in each district and that boys would receive formal education from the age of sixteen or seventeen.

Finally Joshua ben Gamla organized an educational system in which teachers were appointed in every district and every town, and children entered school at the age of six or seven.

A Blessing

O God, our Creator and our Teacher, bless these children who have come into Your sanctuary with eager minds and warm hearts. We honor them for their study of Torah and commitment to lives of loyalty and goodness. Thus will they bring joy to all who love them and honor to the household of Israel.
Strengthen them and guide them in all their ways.
Blessed is the Eternal, the Teacher of Torah to the people of Israel.

Shalom Rav A Blessing of Peace

שָׁלוֹם רָב עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ תָּשִׂים לְעוֹלָם, כִּי אַתָּה הוּא מֶלֶךְ אָדוֹן לְכָל הַשָּׁלוֹם. וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל. בְּכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה בִּשְׁלוֹמֶךָ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, הַמְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּשָּׁלוֹם.

שלום רב

Shalom rav al yisra-el am-cha tasim l'olam.
Ki atah hu melech adon l'chol ha-shalom.
V'tov b'einecha l'varech et am-cha Yisrael
b'chol eyt u-v'chol sha-ah bi-shlomecha.
Baruch atah Adonai ha-m'varech et amo Yisrael
ha-shalom.

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Grant abundant peace eternally for Israel, Your people.
For You are the sovereign source of all peace.
So, may it be a good thing in Your eyes to bless
Your people Israel, and all who dwell on earth, in
every time and hour, with Your peace.

Blessed are You, Compassionate One, who
blesses Your people, Israel, with peace.

Parshat Noach

Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak of Przysucha (1766-1814) used to say: Every man says that he works and slaves only for his children so that they may grow up to become good Jews, well-versed in the Torah. But when the children are grown, the parents continue to insist that they have no time to think about their own education because they must attend to the training of their children.

The Torah points out that Noah regarded himself as a "child" in that sense of the word. "These are the progeny of Noah." Noah was not content to devote all his time to the education of his children. He thought of his own personality, too, as a "child" who is in need of education and improvement. Thus, working to increase his own knowledge and to improve his own character, Noah became "a proper child" who understands that not only children, but also their parents, must serve the Lord.

(Rabbi Jacob Aaron of Alexander)

Aleinu עלינו

עָלֵינוּ לְשַׁבֵּחַ לַאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל, לָתֵת גְּדֻלָּה לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית, שֶׁלֹּא עָשָׂנוּ כְּגוֹיֵי הָאֲרָצוֹת, וְלֹא שָׂמָנוּ כְּמִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה, שֶׁלֹּא שָׂם חֶלְקֵנוּ כָּהֶם, וְגֹרָלֵנוּ כְּכָל הֲמוֹנָם.

וַאֲנַחְנוּ כּוֹרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים וּמוֹדִים, לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ, מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא.

Aleinu l'sha-beyach la-adon ha-kol
La-teyt g'dula l'yotzer b'reysbit.
Shelo asanu k'go-yey ha-aratzot,
V'lo samanu k'mish-p'chot ha-adama.
Shelo sam chel-keynu ka-hem,
V'gora-leynu k'chol hamonam.
Va'anachnu kor-im u'mishtachavim u'modim
Lifnei melech malchey ha-m'lachim
Ha-kadosh baruch hu.

Let us now praise the Source of all,
Let us acclaim the Author of creation,
Who made us unlike the pagans who surrounded us,
unlike the heathens of the ancient world.
Who made our heritage different from theirs,
and assigned to us a unique destiny.
We bend the knee and reverently bow
before the Ruler of rulers, the Holy Blessed One.

Reflection Before the Kaddish

Leader: In the rising of the sun and in its going down, we remember them.

Congregation: In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember them.

Leader: In the opening buds and in the rebirth of spring, we remember them.

Congregation: In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer, we remember them.

Leader: In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn, we remember them.

Congregation: In the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them.

Leader: When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.

Congregation: When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them.

Leader: When we have joys we yearn to share, we remember them.

Congregation: So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

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Mourner's Kaddish

קדיש יתום

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא. בְּעָלְמָא דִּי בְרָא כִרְעוּתֵהּ, וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא:

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאַר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדַּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלַּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא לְעֵלָּא (בעשי"ת וּלְעֵלָּא מִכָּל) מִן כָּל בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא, תֻּשְׁבְּחָתָא וְנֶחֱמָתָא, דַּאֲמִירָן בְּעָלְמָא, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:

Yitgadal v'yitkadash shemey raba b'alma div'ra chirutey v'yamlich malchutey, b'chayeychon u'v'yomeychon u'v'chayey d'chol beyt yisrael ba'agala u'vizman kariv v'imru, amen.

Yehey shemey raba m'varach l'alam ul'almey almaya.

Yitbarach v'yishtabach v'yitpa'ar v'yitromam v'yitnasey v'yit-hadar v'yitaleh v'yit-halal sh'mey d'kudsha b'rich hu l'ela min kol birchata v'shirata tushb'chata v'nechemata da'amiran b'alma v'imru amen.

Yehey sh'lama raba min shemaya v'chayim aleynu v'al kol yisrael ve'imru amen.

Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya'aseh shalom aleynu ve'al kol yisra'el ve'al kol yoshvey tevel v'imru Amen.

Let God's name be made great and holy in the world that was created as God willed.
May God complete the holy realm in your own lifetime, in your days,
and in the days of all the house of Israel,
quickly and soon.
And let us say: Amen.

May God's great name be blessed, forever and as long as worlds endure.

May it be blessed, and praised, and glorified, and held in honor, viewed with awe, embellished, and revered; and may the Blessed Name of holiness be hailed, though it be higher than all the blessings, songs, praises, and consolations that we utter in this world.
And let us say: Amen.

May Heaven grant a universal peace,
and life for us, and for all Israel.
And let us say: Amen.

May the One who creates harmony above,
make peace for us and for all Israel, and for all who dwell on earth.
And let us say: Amen.

Blessing of the Children

We call upon the educators in the congregation and their children to come to the bima and lead us as together we bless our children.

Blessed is the parent, and blessed the child, when their hearts are turned to one another. Blessed is the home filled with gladness and light, the spirit of Shabbat. May God bless you and guide you. Seek truth always, be charitable in your words, just and loving in your deeds. A noble heritage has been entrusted to you; guard it well.

For a Boy

יְשִׂמְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וּכְמְנַשֶּׁה

Y'sim'cha Elohim k'ephrayim u'menasheh

May God inspire you to live in the tradition of Ephraim and Menasheh, who carried forward the life of our people.

For a Girl

יְשִׂמֵךְ אֱלֹהִים כְּשָׂרָה רִבְקָה לְאָה וְרָחֵל

Y'simech Elohim k'Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, v'Rachel

May God inspire you to live in the tradition of Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, who carried forward the life of our people.

For Both Boys and Girls

יְבָרֶכְךָ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָּ
יָאֵר יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחֻנֶּךָּ
יִשָּׂא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיָשֵׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'rehcha
Ya'er Adonai panav eleycha vichuneka
Yisa Adonai panav eleycha v'yasem lecha shalom

May God bless you and keep you. May God look kindly upon you and be gracious to you. May God reach out to you in tenderness and give you peace.

Excerpted from *On the Doorposts of Your House*. © 1994 Central Conference of American Rabbis. Used with permission of the publisher.

SAMPLE SERMON

Rabbi Kenneth L. Cohen
Executive Director, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism—Seaboard Region
President, Washington-Baltimore Region of the Rabbinical Assembly

COBBLERS AND RABBIS

To look at me now, sitting in my book-lined study, you would never know that once upon a time, not all that long ago, I hated school. School, I was convinced, was not designed for little boys like me who wrote smudgy papers, didn't pay attention to the teacher, talked in class (and everywhere else), and forgot to do their homework. I was jealous of the little girls (and they were always girls) who always did everything right, were the teacher's pets, and got a star on every paper.

Somehow, I survived first grade. Barely. They passed me on to the second grade. And then the third. Eventually I went on to earn several degrees, write a few books, and marry one of those little girls who got all the "A"s (she went to Harvard, of course). I suppose that these days they say that I had this or that learning disability. My parents told me that I was not trying hard enough (but I *was* trying so *very* hard!). I thought I was being bad. (I must have been bad, I thought; after all, I was always getting in trouble.) Now I am a rabbi and make my living reading, writing, teaching, and trying to be good. I eventually became a public speaker and a broadcaster with the BBC (both media ideally suited for those who can't spell.) Joanne balances our checkbook (I don't do well with double digits.)

With this sort of baggage, it is no wonder that I am unimpressed when Jewish schools try to convince me how elitist they are. "We have an excellent reputation," admissions officers will tell me, as if quality is directly proportional to the number of students refused entry. (Perhaps the ideal school is so selective that nobody gets in?) At times I think I am living in a Jewish Lake Wobegon, where all the women are strong, all the men good-looking, and all the children above average. My idea of excellence is different. I don't worry too much about the "gifted and talented" who would make it in any event, but about the messy students who fidget, who have their own rich potential and talent, the precious little souls which need to be cherished, not crushed. My favorite school principal, Mrs. Susan Koss of the Jewish Primary Day School in Washington, D.C., says "We don't teach programs, we teach children." We achieve not excellence, but mediocrity or worse, when we aim for the stars but trod on little spirits in the process. We can do better.

I am a proud Jew and rejoice at our people's devotion to learning. We are, after all, the people of the book. But sometimes that can have its drawbacks. I envy much in the Christian tradition. They have saints who can be role models for all sorts of people. If you are simple and unlearned, there are scores of illiterate peasant girls who became canonized. Are you a scholar? You might aspire to be like an Aquinas or a Saint Jerome or a Thomas Moore. Of course we Jews also have saints, but they always seem to be old men with beards who wrote books (or their somewhat masochistic wives who sacrificed themselves so that their scholar husbands could write books). But what do we offer the average person (and most of us are, after all, average)? A great deal, I think.

The early Chasidic movement bequeathed to us a treasury of tales of simple, unlettered folk who proved, though their innate goodness, that one need not be a scholar to be beloved by God. "Nine rabbis don't make a minyan, but ten cobblers do."

All of us have a mix of talents. Most of us are good, or even excellent, at something. But even the rare renaissance men and women among us are not uniformly good at everything. We should rejoice at our talents and be humbled by our weaknesses, and always be mindful that we, and everyone else, are unique and precious children of God.

Susan Koss tells a story. Once she left her house for an early morning minyan at the synagogue. Due to the hour, the earth was covered with a beautiful blanket of largely undisturbed snow. As she approached the synagogue, there were more and more footprints. She observed that the footprints differed. "Some were concise and measured, others sort of slid together vertically as if the person wanted to make sure that his prints stood out." Some were made by children and some by adults. "Some were large and some were small." She wrote, "I was struck by the thought that there were so many clear and varied prints but yet they were all leading to the same destination. It didn't matter how the person walked, just that s/he arrived in shul."

Mrs. Koss concludes, "That is exactly how children learn! So many people were and are brought up to believe that learning is accomplished in one way, sitting at our desks, listening to the teacher talk, following directions—followed by success! What happens when we simply can't sit? What happens when two seconds after the teacher is finished talking, we can't remember what s/he said and certainly not what the directions were!"

But, to borrow Susan's imagery, we all eventually make it to the synagogue door. We follow different routes, and some get there before others. Some shuffle and some plow and some may meander a bit, but whether we are rabbis or cobblers, we all are needed there for the minyan. And all of us count.

Lesson Plan for Pre-Early Elementary School

Dina L. Burt RJE
Principal
Temple Rodef Shalom Religious School
Falls Church, VA

Theme

Taking care of ourselves, and having others care for us, helps us have healthy bodies and be ready to learn and be our best.

Goal

Students will begin to reflect on how they can keep themselves healthy, happy, and ready to learn.

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recall the story of Noah and the ark.
- Identify Noah as the "caregiver" of the animals.
- List people who take care of them.
- Identify their own roles in staying healthy and ready to learn.

Materials

For Preschool: Pre-cut and mounted pictures (approximately 10) of people eating healthy food, exercising, looking happy, reading, and learning; storybook of Noah (and/or a flannel set of the story).

For Lower Elementary: magazines (at least one per student), scissors, construction paper, mural paper, glue or paste, storybook of Noah (any appropriate version that focuses on the animals rather than the flood and destruction).

Teacher Preparation

Review the lesson plan, gather materials, select an appropriate version of the Noah story, cut out pictures and mount on stiff paper (for preschool).

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Overview

Opening and introduction to theme of care-giving (10 minutes).
The Noah Story (10 minutes).
Discussion (15 minutes).
Game (10-15 minutes).
Activity (10-15 minutes).
Wrap Up (1 minute).

Opening (10 minutes)

Gather the students for a brief discussion of the following questions:

Who has pets that live in their house?

Do you help take care of the pets?

What do you do to take good care of the pets? *(Responses may include: Make sure they have food to eat and water to drink, take them for walks and play with them, and take them to the veterinarian when they are sick.)*

What are some of the things that you teach a pet? *(Responses may include: Not to have accidents inside, how to sit, how to walk on a leash, not to bite or jump up on people, not to run into the street, not to chew on things.)*

What happens if you do not take good care of the pets or teach them the things they need to know? *(Responses may include: They get hungry or thirsty, they can get sick or hurt, and they can get lost or even die. Be sure to reassure the children that some of these things may happen to pets even when we take care of them, and it is not necessarily their fault.)*

The Noah Story (10 minutes)

Explain to the students that this week, the Torah tells us a story about a man who took care of the animals in a big flood. Ask if anyone knows the name of that man.

Read or tell a short version of the story of Noah and the flood. For preschoolers or younger children, consider using a flannel board to tell the story for a more engaging visual effect.

Help the students recognize that Noah and his family took good care of the animals, keeping them fed, healthy, and safe during the storm.

Discussion (15 minutes)

Use the following questions to shift the discussion from being the helper to being the one who is helped.

Ask, "Who takes care of you?" *(Responses may include: mom, dad, brothers and sisters, other relative, nanny, babysitter, "teacher" in a child care program.)*

Ask, "How do they take care of you and help you learn to do things?" *(Responses may include: make my lunch, help me get dressed, play with me, love me, read to me.)* If the children have difficulty with this open-ended question, ask more specific ones such as: If you are hungry, who helps you get something to eat? Who takes care of you when you are sick? If you hurt yourself, what does your mom do? Who reads stories to you? Who takes you to the park or playground to play? Who shows you how to tie your shoes?

Ask, "How can you help take care of yourself?" *(Responses may include: eat good food, go to bed on time, look both ways and hold someone's hand before crossing the street, get dressed, brush my teeth, don't play with matches.)* Again, if the children have a difficult time with the open-ended questions, prompt them with more specific questions such as: How can you help take care of your teeth?

Ask, "What can happen if you do not take care of yourself?" *(Responses may include: feel tired, get hurt or sick, get cavities, don't feel good.)* Again, more specific prompts may be needed, such as "If you don't go to bed on time and get enough sleep, how do you feel?" Or, "If you don't wear a hat and mittens when you go outside on a very cold day, how do you feel?" "If you don't look both ways before crossing the street, and hold a grown-up's hand, what could happen?"

Game

(15 minutes-Preschool, 10 minutes-Lower Elementary)

Select one student to be Noah (or you may choose to play that role), and then give pairs of students different animals to be (for older children, whisper the animal name so that the other students can't hear). For example, tell two children to be the cows, two to be the frogs, and two to be the birds. Tell the children to mix up (so the two "cows" don't start out right next to each other.) Then have them start making their animal noises and crawl, hop, "fly" or move in the manner appropriate for their animal. The object is for the animals to find their pair. Once they do, they should crawl, hop, or "fly" over to "Noah" who can pretend to pet them, feed them, or play with them until all of the other animals have found their pairs.

Activity

(10 minutes-Preschool, 15 minutes-Lower Elementary)

For Preschool: Hold up the prepared pictures of children eating healthy food, exercising, and doing other things that help them be healthy and ready to learn. Ask the students to explain what is happening in each picture.

If there is an assistant in the room, divide the children into groups to allow for more student feedback. If you are concerned that the children have been sitting too long, post the pictures along the walls or in the hallway and view them like a museum tour. If possible, arrange to leave the pictures up where the students can see them each day.

For Lower Elementary: Provide piles of magazines and ask the students to cut out pictures of people doing things that are healthy, that show they are taking good care of themselves or of other people, and that get them ready to learn.

Have the students make an individual or class collage entitled "Taking Care of Ourselves: Getting Ready to Learn and Be Our Best!"

Wrap Up (1 minute)

Remind the students that each of us, children too, can take good care of ourselves, and that we can also count on the people who help take care of us and teach us new things.

Lesson Plan for Upper Elementary School

Dina L. Burt RJE
Principal
Temple Rodef Shalom Religious School
Falls Church, VA

Theme

Healthy bodies lead to healthy minds, and we need both to be the best selves we can be.

Goal

Students will begin to explore the concept that everyone is entitled to the opportunity to be the best he or she can be.

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the care givers in their lives.
- Identify themselves as a source of caring.
- Recall the definition of *Pikuach nefesh* as respect for life.
- List, in their own words, the things necessary to help them be healthy, learn, succeed, and be their best selves.

Materials

Construction paper or brown mural paper; pre-cut leaves for "The Me Tree" and the "We Tree" (cut from construction paper, either green or orange, yellow, brown, red, and other autumn leaf colors); scissors, markers, poster board, glue or paste.

Preparation

Review the lesson plan, select an age-appropriate version of the Noah story (and have enough copies for all students), gather the materials, cut leaves for the "Me Tree" out of construction paper (perhaps ten leaves per student), draw or cut out a large tree trunk with branches from brown mural paper for a "We Tree." On the trunk, write: "Partnering with God to take care of others so they can learn and be their best selves."

Overview

Opening (15 minutes)
Activity: "The Me Tree" (15 minutes)
Tying to the Text: The Noah Story (15 minutes)
Closing: Getting the Word Out (15 minutes)

Opening

Have the students brainstorm responses to the following questions, which you may want to list on the chalkboard or a large sheet of paper.

Ask, "Who takes care of you?" *(Responses may include: parents, older brothers or sisters, other relatives, and babysitters.)*

Ask, "How do they take care of you?" If children have difficulty with this open-ended question, you may want to get them started with more specific prompts, such as: "How do your parents take care of you when you are hungry? How do they take care of you when you are sick or hurt? How do they help you be ready to learn in school? How do they help keep you safe? How do they make sure you get enough sleep to be healthy and ready to learn?"

Next, ask the students, "How do you take care of yourself?" Again, if the students need more specific prompts, ask them: "How do you keep your body healthy?" *(Exercise, sleep, eat good food, and wash hands, for example.)* "How do you keep yourself safe?" *(Wear a bicycle helmet, for example.)*

Explain to the class that Judaism asks us to fulfill the *Mitzvah* of *pikuach nefesh* (preserving, protecting life) by taking care of ourselves and being the best selves we can be. *Pikuach nefesh* reminds us of our partnership with God. *(This assumes that from past discussions your students have a clear understanding of partnership with God. If this is not the case, more explanation will need to be added at this point.)*

Ask the students to think about what makes them strong, healthy, ready to learn, and the best they can be. *(Responses may include: eating healthy food, getting exercise, getting enough sleep, doing their homework, studying for a test, and listening to their parents.)*

Ask the students to recall times when they felt really sick, tired, or hungry. Ask them what it is like to try to learn when you are feeling that way. Tell them that some children have a hard time learning and being their best selves because their parents don't have enough money, and can't take them to the doctor when they are sick or having problems with their eyes (and can't see the blackboard) or ears (and can't hear what the teacher is saying). They may also have a hard time concentrating because they didn't have enough to eat for breakfast and lunch.

Activity: The Me Tree

Give each student a piece of construction paper, brown mural paper, or poster board. Ask them to draw a tree trunk and branches. Then give each student a pile of pre-cut leaves. On each leaf, have students write one thing that helps them be their best self. Answers may include some choices from the discussion as well as new ideas. Have them write on as many leaves as possible, and then glue or paste them onto their trees. Then, invite the students to share some of the new ideas on their leaves with the class.

Tying to the Text: The Noah Story

Have the students read an age-appropriate version of the Noah story and be prepared to list the ways that Noah fulfilled the *Mitzvah* of *pikuach nefesh*. When all of the students have finished the story, ask them to tell you how Noah fulfilled the *Mitzvah* of *pikuach nefesh*, while you write their responses on a large sheet of paper. *(If desired, before class you could cut the paper into the shape of an ark and attach cut-out figures of Noah and a couple of the animals.)*

Then, tell the students "God thinks that it was important for Noah to take care of the animals. And God thinks that it is important to take care of other people in the same way."

Ask the children, "How can we continue our partnership with God and take care of others so that they have the opportunity to be their best selves?" If time permits, divide the class into small groups to brainstorm responses. If not, do this as a large group activity. Have them write their responses on more of the pre-cut leaves. Bring them back together to share their lists. As the small groups read out their ideas, have them paste their leaves on the "We Tree" branches. *(For classes with prior knowledge of* Tikkun Olam, Tzedakah, *and* Gemilut Chasadim, *this is a great opportunity to review.)*

Closing: Getting the Word Out (15 minutes)

Explain that sometimes the best way to help others is simply to get the word out. Ask the students to design an ad poster to remind everyone of what children need to be happy and ready to learn, succeed, and be their best selves. Have them sketch out their ideas on plain paper, and when ready give them poster board and markers to make the final product. Afterward, hang the ad posters around the synagogue for all to see.

Lesson Plan for Middle and High School

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Note: This lesson is designed for both middle and high school students. It will be up to the teacher to guide the conversation and the projects to an age-appropriate level.

Theme

Children are entitled to an opportunity to learn and succeed.

Goal

To create an awareness among students that every child should be helped to learn and succeed.

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recall blessings in their lives (things for which they are thankful).
- Articulate some of the things children need to learn and succeed.
- List ways they can help themselves and others to learn and succeed.

Materials

Flashcards: *Pikuach Nefesh, Tzedakah, Tikkun Olam, Gemilut Chasadim*; handout: "Walking with God" (one per student); paper and pens or pencils; text of Noah story in Genesis.

Preparation

Review the lesson plan and determine areas to adjust for the age-level of your class, prepare flash cards, copy the handout on page 98, and gather materials. Contact local schools, social service agencies, or community groups to find options for the class to "take action." At the same time, ask the people you call to tell you a statistic or sentence or two that describes the problems they are trying to address.

Overview

Opening (15 minutes).
Noah Walked with God: Text Study (10 minutes).
Studying the World Around Us: Today's Reality (20 minutes).
Walking with God: Taking Action (15 minutes).

Opening (15 minutes)

1. Ask the students to list the things in their lives for which they are thankful. Ask them to cover all parts of their lives, and to include people, objects, and experiences. If they have trouble getting started, give some examples such as: my parents, the home I live in, my trip last summer to Israel or a month at camp.

2. Ask the students, "How do the things on your list make you a better person? How do they help you learn and succeed?" Help them recognize that a secure environment and the many blessings of their lives help them to learn and succeed.

3. Ask the students the following kinds of questions, allowing time for their reflection and response: "What happens when children don't have the basic necessities of life? For example, how do you think not having enough food and being hungry affects a child's ability to learn? How do you think your ability to learn and succeed would be affected by having an earache or vision problem and not being able to see a doctor because your parents didn't earn enough money? What would it be like to attend a school that didn't have enough textbooks or laboratory equipment? What difference would that make in your ability to learn and succeed?"

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Then, ask the students if they think there are students who face these kinds of challenges to their learning and success. *(This would be a good place to share any information about the problems facing children that you gleaned in your preparation calling local social service agencies and community organizations.)* Ask if they believe we have a responsibility to help them. Be sensitive to the possibility that some children in your class may be affected by these circumstances.

Noah Walked with God: Text Study (10 minutes)

Hold up flash cards with the following words:

Pikuach Nefesh, Tzedakah, Tikkun Olam, Gemilut Chasadim

Ask the students to explain these terms, and offer any additions or corrections to their responses.

Tell the students that this week's Torah portion is the story of Noah. Ask the students to tell the story (focusing on the highlights more than the details.) Have the text ready in case they are not able to recall enough of the story.

After reviewing the story, underscore for the students two central points: the people were destroyed for corruptness, and Noah was chosen for his righteousness. Distribute the handout and ask for a student volunteer to read aloud the passage "Noah Walked With God." Tell them, "We can conclude that we are in a partnership with God and that to walk with God we must fulfill the *Mitzvah* of *Pikuach Nefesh*—preserving life. It is an obligation for us to be the best we can be and for us to ensure that others have the same opportunity."

Studying the World Around Us: Today's Reality (20 minutes)

Ask the students to read Passage 2 of the handout and reflect on how Charles, the author, may have felt as a child. Encourage the students to go beyond the surface and get to the real feelings. Pass out the paper and pens or pencils, and ask the students to write journal entries from the point of view of Charles as a child. After they are finished writing, invite any students who wish to share the journal entries they wrote.

Discuss what things made it hard for Charles to learn and succeed. What could have improved his situation? What else could people have done to help Charles learn and succeed? How might we respond to a situation like that now, or how may we have responded to such a situation in the past? Be sensitive to situations in your classroom in which students may actually have faced, or are facing such difficulties.

Walking with God: Taking Action (15 minutes)

Ask the students to plan a project to help children learn and succeed. As the teacher, you will need to guide them to age-appropriate possibilities that would be feasible and useful in your community. Depending on resources such as time and money, you will need to decide if a long-term project is doable, or if a one-time project will work better.

Possible projects include: holding a a bake sale or car-wash to raise funds for school supplies, sponsoring a book drive or toy drive, filling a wish list at a local shelter for children and families, volunteering to tutor younger children, or writing to elected officials about how they can help children in your community or state. This is, of course, just an initial list. Each community will have many more opportunities for helping. See "Preparation" on previous page for more information about identifying possibilities. Follow through on the projects and be sure the students see what a difference they can make.

Walking with God

Passage 1: "Noah Walked with God"

Walking with God means following God's laws and commandments. It means behaving in the ways that God shows us. The people who died in the flood were wicked. They did not walk with God, so God destroyed them.

But God doesn't tell us how to behave all the time. God wants us to learn right from wrong by studying the world around us.

Our teachers say: First God created the Torah and all its laws. Then God created the world using the laws of the Torah. When we study the Torah, we are studying the same laws that God built into our world. It is the Torah which teaches us how to walk with God.

Passage 2: from *Poverty Matters: The Cost of Child Poverty in America*

In *Poverty Matters*, Charles Kinard, MSW and ABD, with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families describes his childhood this way:

It was hard to focus on school when you were worrying about survival—things like how to get home from school safely and how we were going to eat that night. In high school, I was a D student. I grew up in the projects, sharing my bedroom with two older sisters, with plenty of crime and poverty around us.

I had to work starting when I was 10. My whole life focus was not on learning; it was on staying alive. I had two or three odd jobs, from cutting grass to working in a janitorial service. That was not for saving for a bicycle but to help to pay for rent and food. The bills don't stop coming in because you're poor; they have to get paid. I couldn't sit back and complain.

But having to get up the next morning to go to school was hard. Athletics really saved me. Before the ninth grade I had to work multiple jobs. Then in the ninth grade my older sister got a job in a textile factory. That money let me have just one job after school, instead of two or three. That let me start playing sports, which I was never able to play before.

My grades didn't get better, but at least I had something that kept me coming to school. I didn't learn how to study because school wasn't as important as survival. Also being in remedial classes and low-level special-ed classes made it hard. Still, I showed I had talent in class and in sports. I went to Hampton University on a full athletic scholarship. It took me well into my junior year of college to realize I was finally in a nurturing environment, where it wasn't about survival. Where I could find material that related to my life and described people who look like me, an African American. Where I could focus on my studies.

And I began to get all A's.

Lesson Plan for Adults

Dina L. Burt RJE
Principal
Temple Rodef Shalom Religious School
Falls Church, VA

Theme

All children are entitled to the opportunity to learn and succeed.

Goal

To create an awareness of the injustices that exist in today's world preventing all children from learning and succeeding.

Lesson Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Recall the reason for the flood in the story of Noah.
- Compare and contrast God's role in the Noah story and in our lives today.
- Learn more about the obstacles to children's learning and success today.
- Identify what is needed to help all children learn and succeed and who may provide it.
- Explore the difference they can make and create a covenant to help children.

Materials

Noah and the Ark (children's version); Genesis text of Noah and the Flood (a copy for each participant); handouts: "Stumbling Blocks" and "Every Child"; flip chart and markers; paper and pens (unless participants bring their own); mural paper; brightly colored construction paper.

Preparation

- Make copies of the Genesis text for all participants.
- Make copies of the handouts (pages 101-103) for all participants.
- Write the heading "Obstacles to Children's Learning and Success" on one piece of flip chart paper.
- Conduct some basic research into children's needs in your state and community. See notes in the section below titled "Understanding Current Realities" for sources of information.
- Write "What All Children Need to Learn and Succeed" at the top of another piece of flip chart paper. Below it, create two columns titled "Physical Support" and "Emotional Support."
- Cut the brightly-colored construction paper into squares measuring approximately 6"x6", providing one square per participant.
- Hang the mural paper on a wall, draw a rainbow-shaped arc across it, and print "Our Covenants with God on Behalf of Children" across the top.

Overview

Opening.
Text Study and Discussion.
Understanding Current Realities.
Identifying Solutions.
Making Personal Covenants.

Opening

Remind participants that this week's Parasha is Noah, which involves the story of Noah and the flood. Begin by reading aloud a very short children's version of the Noah's ark story to the group. Look for a version that is as simple as possible and with as little explanation as possible. Explain to the group, after the reading, that children often hear this simple story about a man who saves the animals from the flood. But, as adults, there is more to the story that we need to understand.

Text Study and Discussion

Ask the participants to gather in small study groups, read the complete Noah text from Genesis, and consider the following questions.

1. God creates the punishment of the flood because God is unhappy with the corruption God sees among the people on earth. Do you think that this is a fair punishment? Why or why not?

2. God seems to have a definite idea of how people are to behave. God destroys people for their wickedness and chooses Noah for his righteousness.

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Speculate on what God might say about people in our world today.

Reconvene participants into a large group. Begin by having participants share responses from their groups.

Explain that by reading the text we discover that God has a plan for the way people should behave on this earth. We are expected to learn the lesson about behaving righteously and walking with God through the action of treating others well and "doing the right thing."

Understanding Current Realities

Continue, "In today's world, we fall short in many areas. We could spend a lot of time listing the many broad areas of great concern (such as politics, foreign affairs, nuclear arms, and murder rates), but in honor of Children's Sabbath we will go directly to the issue of the treatment of children."

Distribute copies of the handout "Stumbling Blocks." Invite three participants to read the passages aloud to the group. (If the group is large, you may want to divide it into three groups and assign each small group a different story.) You may want to preface the reading by assuring the participants that, despite the disbelief they may feel about such grim stories, the experiences that will be related are true and reflect the situations confronting countless children and families today.

After the passages are read, allow time for participants to share their reactions. (If the group was divided into small groups, reconvene them.) Next, share information about problems confronting children in your community and state. Describe the rate of child poverty, violence, lack of health insurance, number of children in child care and Head Start, and school drop-out. This information may be found in *The State of America's Children Yearbook 1999* published by the Children's Defense Fund, and is available through the Children's Defense Fund's website at *www.childrensdefense.org*. See Section 8 for ordering information. You can get information about your community by calling social service agencies, the office of the Superintendent of Schools, the department of health, and other agencies and organizations serving children and families.

Ask participants to identify the obstacles to children's learning and success that were raised in the handout readings and in the state and local information you shared. If participants don't raise them, you should add the following: lack of health insurance, poverty, poor education, and lack of nutrition. List the obstacles identified on the flip chart paper under the heading "Obstacles to Children's Learning and Success."

Identifying Solutions

Turn to the flip chart paper prepared with the heading "What Children Need to Learn and Succeed" and the columns titled "Physical Support" and "Emotional Support."

Tell the participants that every child deserves the opportunity to learn and succeed, and to do just that they need help from the adults in their lives, from the community, and the nation.

Invite the participants to brainstorm responses to "what children need to learn and succeed." Encourage them to refer to the list of obstacles they created earlier. What is needed to remove or surmount those obstacles? Invite the group to determine whether each idea is something that can be provided by an individual, a congregation, the community, or state or federal government. Encourage participants to recognize that effective action for children will require action at all of these levels; the solution cannot be entirely private or wholly governmental.

Distribute the handout "Every Child" and ask volunteers to read each paragraph aloud to the group.

Making Personal Covenants

Remind the participants that God created a covenant with Noah, saying that God would not destroy the world again. The rainbow was a sign of God's covenant. Ask the participants to create a covenant with God about what they will do to uphold children and help all children learn and succeed. Allow sufficient time for individual reflection on what the covenants will be.

Distribute squares of colored construction paper. Ask participants to write their covenants on the squares. Assure them that they will not have to read them aloud, although they are welcome to do so. (If you think that the following activity will inhibit participants by lessening the privacy of their covenants, you may omit it. Privacy may encourage participants to be more honest with themselves. On the other hand, posting their covenants collectively may be an affirming and inspiring experience.) After all of the covenants have been written, invite the participants to tape or paste them in the shape of a rainbow on the strip of mural paper headed "Our Covenants with God on Behalf of Children."

Stumbling Blocks

Story 1 from *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, by Jonathan Kozol

"How frustrating it is, [the principal of a school in our nation's capital says to Jonathan Kozol, a writer], to see so many children going hungry. On Fridays in the cafeteria I see small children putting chicken nuggets in their pockets. They're afraid of being hungry on the weekend."

A teacher looks out at her class: "These children don't smile. Why should they learn when their lives are so hard and so unhappy?"

Seven children meet me in the basement cafeteria. The flood that brought the rats is gone, but other floods have streaked the tiles in the ceiling.

The school is on a road that runs past several boarded buildings. Gregory tells me they are called "pipe" houses. "Go by there one day—it be vacant. Next day, they bring sofas, chairs. Day after that, you see the junkies going in."

I ask the children what they'd do to get rid of the drugs.

"Get the New Yorkers off our streets," Octavia says. "They come here from New York, perturbed, and sell our children drugs."

"Children working for the dealers," Gregory explains.

A teacher sitting with us says, "At eight years old, some of the boys are running drugs and holding money for dealers. By 28, they're going to be dead."

Tunisia: "It makes me sad to see black people kill black people."

"Four years from now," the principal says when we sit down to talk after the close of school, "one third of the little girls in this fifth grade are going to be pregnant."

I look into the faces of these children. At this moment they seem full of hope and innocence and expectation. The little girls have tiny voices and they squirm about on little chairs and lean way forward with their elbows on the table and their noses just above the table's surface and make faces at each other and seem mischievous and wise and beautiful. Two years from now, in junior high, there may be more toughness in their eyes, a look of lessened expectations and increasing cynicism. By the time they are 14, a certain rawness and vulgarity may have set in. Many will be hostile and embittered by that time. Others will coarsen, partly the result of diet, partly self-neglect and self-dislike. Visitors who meet such girls in elementary school feel tenderness; by junior high, they feel more pity or alarm.

But today, in Anacostia, the children are young and whimsical and playful. If you hadn't worked with kids like these for 20 years, you would have no reason to feel sad. You'd think, "They have the world before them."

"The little ones come into school on Monday," says the teacher, "and they're hungry. A five-year-old. Her laces are undone. She says, 'I had to dress myself this morning.' I ask her why. She says, 'They took my mother off to jail.' Their stomachs hurt. They don't know why. We feed them something hot because they're hungry."

I ask the children if they go to church. Most of them say they do. I ask them how they think of God.

"He has a face like ours," Octavia says.

A white face or a black face?

"Mexican," she says.

Tunisia: "I don't know the answer to that question."

"When you go to God," says Gregory, "He'll remind you of everything you did. He adds it up. If you were good, you go to Heaven. If you were selfish, then He makes you stand and wait awhile over there. Sometimes you get a second chance. You need to wait and see."

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continued on page 102

from *Poverty Matters: The Cost of Child Poverty in America*

Story 2

In *Poverty Matters*, Charles Kinard, MSW and ABD, with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families describes his childhood this way:

It was hard to focus on school when you were worrying about survival—things like how to get home from school safely and how we were going to eat that night. In high school, I was a D student. I grew up in the projects, sharing my bedroom with two older sisters, with plenty of crime and poverty around us.

I had to work starting when I was 10. My whole life focus was not on learning; it was on staying alive. I had two or three odd jobs, from cutting grass to working in a janitorial service. That was not for saving for a bicycle but to help to pay for rent and food. The bills don't stop coming in because you're poor; they have to get paid. I couldn't sit back and complain.

But having to get up the next morning to go to school was hard. Athletics really saved me. Before the ninth grade I had to work multiple jobs. Then in the ninth grade my older sister got a job in a textile factory. That money let me have just one job after school, instead of two or three. That let me start playing sports, which I was never able to play before.

My grades didn't get better, but at least I had something that kept me coming to school. I didn't learn how to study because school wasn't as important as survival. Also being in remedial classes and low-level special-ed classes made it hard. Still, I showed I had talent in class and in sports. I went to Hampton University on a full athletic scholarship. It took me well into my junior year of college to realize I was finally in a nurturing environment, where it wasn't about survival. Where I could find material that related to my life and described people who look like me, an African American. Where I could focus on my studies.

And I began to get all A's.

Story 3

In 1983, Mary Tamper's middle-income world came tumbling down when her husband, William, died of leukemia, leaving Mary struggling to support her young son, Justin, on a meager salary from her job as a teacher's aide.

In the following months, Mary was sick frequently. In addition, she found out she was pregnant with twins. One of the twins died in utero, a result of the strains on Mary, according to the doctors. The other contracted bacterial meningitis soon after birth. The medical bills for Mary's and the baby's illnesses, food, and housing expenses soon depleted the family's savings. Desperate, Mary turned to public safety net programs to supplement her small earnings. She was approved for WIC (the federal special supplemental food and nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children), $770 a month in Social Security survivors benefits, and a tiny $121 monthly food stamp allowance. But she was denied welfare and Medicaid because her income, low as it was, put her above the eligibility threshold.

By early 1986, the family was living on the edge, stretching to make ends meet on $165 a month after paying the rent. "There were times when money ran short and we had no food," says Mary. WIC helped but was not enough. "There were ... times when my son would say, 'Mom, I know you just fed me, but I'm still hungry.' That hurt me more than any knife or sword could because there was no food in the cupboard to feed him." By 1990, there was a little more money to go around. The family's Social Security benefits had been raised to about $900 a month, and the rent burden of the family was lower, thanks to a government housing subsidy. Still, Mary and the boys are nowhere near having financial security.

Looking back, Mary says, "Has hunger hurt my boys? Yes." Justin, the older son, is slower to learn in school and not as easy-going as most other children—a result, Mary feels, of inadequate nutrition and the strains of growing up poor.

(From Mary Tamper's testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget, February, 1990.)

EVERY CHILD

Until every child goes to school every day ready to learn and ready to succeed, America's promise will never be realized.

Until every child receives the health care, early educational experiences, standard of living, and family and community supports necessary for school readiness, America's future will be jeopardized.

Until every child is valued, held to high standards, and expected to achieve, this generation's moral legacy will be compromised.

Every child: Ready to Learn, Ready to Succeed!

What does it mean for every child to go to school ready to learn and succeed? It takes:

- Signing children up for health insurance under the new state Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Children who cannot see the blackboard, cannot hear the teacher, or are distracted by pain cannot learn to the best of their ability. Through CHIP, many of American's 11.6 million uninsured children have a new opportunity to maximize their potential in school. (Call 1-800-CDF-1200, #2 for more information.)
- Providing affordable, quality child care for preschoolers whose parents are employed through substantial new investments, because only with the proper stimulation, nurture, and early education can young children's brains develop sufficiently to enable them to enter school ready to succeed.
- Ensuring safe, productive after-school activities for school-age children, because the five million young people who are unsupervised in the later afternoon are at risk for smoking, drinking, drug abuse, too-early sexual activity, and even crime and violence. All of these dangerous behaviors impair a child's ability to succeed in school—and in life. Tripling the federal investment in after-school programs, as President Clinton has proposed, will go a long way toward helping these children.
- Developing new initiatives to assist low-income families, because the harmful effects of poverty on a child's ability to learn and develop can be irreversible. Children who are not properly fed, clothed, or housed too often lag behind in school. Creating new opportunities for financial independence and raising living standards—for working families as well as those receiving assistance—are essential to our children's education.
- Reforming education to benefit our children. It is long past time for America to teach our children based on the premise that every child can perform at high levels—and to provide the right supports and expectations both in and out of school. Our entire educational system—from the superintendents and school boards to teachers—must be singularly focused on helping all children learn to the best of their ability.
- Connecting all children to caring adults, in their family, congregation, and community, who will help them develop strong moral grounding, know their intrinsic value, set their sights high, and make wise decisions that foster a successful future.

Section 6

Interfaith Worship Resources

This section provides suggestions for planning an interfaith Children's Sabbath, and a sample interfaith service. It also includes sacred readings, prayers, and reflections from a variety of faith traditions. These can be used in an interfaith celebration, to enrich your congregation's own Children's Sabbath and broaden its understanding of other faith traditions, or they can spark Children's Sabbath planning for congregations of those faith traditions.

Planning an Interfaith Celebration

Organizing a community-wide interfaith service may sound like a daunting task, but it can be done successfully, and has been, with tremendous contributions to the communities. These are suggested ways to coordinate the event. Feel free to adapt this process to suit your needs.

1. Build a team. Connect with two, three, four, or more people to help you get started. Then convene an advisory committee of eight to fifteen members. Strive to build an advisory committee that represents the full range of religious bodies, races, and ethnicities of your community.

2. Get the ball rolling. Develop an efficient agenda for the initial meeting of the advisory committee. A productive meeting will generate energy, enthusiasm, and continued commitment. Key items to determine include the date, site, range of events, and point people to assume responsibility for aspects of the event. You may find it helpful to show the video *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths: Raising Voices, Linking Hands for Children* to convey the purpose and power of the Children's Sabbath (see Section 8 for ordering information).

3. Recruit others. Begin to contact as many congregations and community organizations as you can to get them on board. Be sure to invite congregations of all ethnic and racial groups. Network with ministerial, rabbinical, and interfaith associations, schools, social clubs, and organizations dealing with children, poverty, violence, health, hunger, homelessness, education, and parenting. Contact them by letter and include a response form for those who wish to participate. Follow-up with a phone call. Make a quick reference list of those who respond affirmatively that you can add to later.

4. Develop a game plan and assign areas for coordination. Areas to coordinate include: site selection, administration and funding, worship planning, music, outreach/promotion/media, and activities to raise awareness and generate service and advocacy.

5. Find a suitable site. Seek advice from people who have done similar events, and choose a site as early as possible. Feasible sites for interfaith activities include auditoriums, hospitals, convention centers, atriums of public buildings, and schools. Of course, religious places of worship are also good sites. If you use a congregation's building, be sure the religious leader is

involved in the planning, since he or she will know the logistics of the site.

Some things to consider in selecting a site are:

Size: Make sure it is large enough to accommodate the crowd you expect, but not so large as to look empty.

Staging: Will it accommodate choirs and a procession? Is there a good sound and lighting system?

Location: Is it centrally located and convenient for all segments of the community to get to?

Cost: Try to find a site that will host the service without any charge.

Worship space: Is it conducive to interfaith worship? Will it foster unity among persons who don't know each other? Consider temporary removal of symbols or objects that might cause others distress and which can be easily removed. Also, consider the addition of banners and symbols or expressions of welcome that may make guests feel more at home.

Parking: Is parking available or is public transport nearby?

Accessibility: Is it accessible to people with disabilities? (Remember to have an interpreter for those who are deaf or hearing impaired.)

Liturgical Suggestions for Interfaith Services

If everyone will be speaking or singing it, be sure it is inclusive. If a part of the interfaith service, such as a prayer or song, will be spoken or sung by the congregation, be sure that it does not include language that feels exclusive (such as "Jesus Christ" or "Allah.") Instead, draw on the universal and unifying aspects of our various religious traditions. Keeping the references to "God" is the safest bet for prayers and songs that everyone will be invited to join in. Other appropriate ways of addressing God in an interfaith service are: Creator, Source of All Life, Our God and Sustainer, Eternal Creator, and Source of Our Being. Some appropriate closing addresses include: "In Thy name we pray," "In the name of God," or simply, "Amen."

Have representatives present readings or prayers specific to their traditions. If individual leaders will be presenting readings or offering prayers, they may include references specific to their own traditions (such as Jesus Christ or Allah.) Similarly, a choir that is performing an anthem could sing music specific to its tradition. Just make sure that you invite representatives from a range of faith traditions, and encourage them to select readings and prayers that are as inclusive as possible and do not denigrate other religious traditions.

Be as broadly representative as possible. Try to include representatives from as many faith traditions as possible. Also be sure to balance gender, racial, and ethnic representation. You may not be able to give every representative a "speaking part" in the service. Invite those who will not be able to speak in the service to participate in an opening procession (with each processor wearing robes or other religious garb appropriate to their tradition) and sit in a special section, either on the stage with the speakers or at the front of the congregation. List the processors and their religious affiliation in the service program.

Know ahead of time what will be spoken and sung. An interfaith service is not the right time for surprises! It is important that the service have a unified message that lifts up children's needs and inspires people to action. While one would never constrain leaders from reading or praying what they feel is right in services entirely under their leadership, in a cooperative service like an interfaith Children's Sabbath, which aims to lift up particular concerns, it is entirely appropriate to exercise such oversight for the service.

- One possibility is to use a service that you, along with your planning team, write in advance. Then assign the pre-written parts to religious leaders. The only part that would not be pre-written would be the sermon. It is important to select a leader to give the sermon who you are confident will speak in terms appropriate for an interfaith gathering and also will address the children's concerns that are the focus of the service. The sample interfaith Children's Sabbath service on pages 108-111 is one model that you could use.
- Another possibility is to have the invited religious leaders write their own "parts" or select their own

readings. In this case, be sure that they give you a copy of their prayer or reading in advance. If the prayer or reading is not in keeping with the Children's Sabbath theme, give them more guidance about the Children's Sabbath theme and purpose and ask them to select another prayer or reading.

Be clear about timing. An interfaith service that strives to be representative runs the risk of being too long. Additionally, a sense of time and appropriate length for services varies by faith tradition. When you invite leaders, be sure they know how much time has been allotted for their part. Emphasize that everyone must keep to their allotted time. (This is another reason for having copies in advance of what each leader will be reading or praying.) Know in advance what you will do if you need to shorten the service if it begins to run too long. The least offensive place to cut is usually verses from a congregational song, or an entire song. Be sure that the music director knows in advance that this is a possibility, and decide who will make the decision and who will communicate it to the leaders and congregation, if necessary.

Schedule the interfaith service for a time that does not exclude the participation of some. For example, scheduling an interfaith service on Saturday afternoon, during the Jewish Shabbat, would prevent most Jews from attending. Similarly, Sunday morning scheduling is likely to conflict with most church services. Sunday afternoon or evening is the usually the best time for an interfaith event.

Be aware, however, that you will need to do lots of outreach and promotion to generate strong attendance for an interfaith service, whenever it is scheduled. See the promotion suggestions on pages 18–21.

Brief the leadership in advance. Ask all of the participating religious leaders (both those with speaking parts and those who will be processing) to gather 30–60 minutes before the start of the service. At that time, give each a copy of the service program, allow time for them to robe or put on their religious garb, and brief them on the logistics of the service: who will process with whom, where they will sit, which podium they will speak from, and other such details. You may want to designate one leader to be responsible for responding to unexpected occurances, such as filling in if a leader doesn't show up or has to leave suddenly.

An Interfaith Service

Wonderfully Made: Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed

Call to Prayer/Gathering Words

Leader 1: Are you ready, ready to worship God?

Leader 2: Are you ready, ready to listen to the concerns of God's children?

Leader 3: Are you ready, ready to help all God's children learn?

Leader 4: Are you ready, ready to help all God's children succeed?

Leader 5: Are you ready, ready to fulfill your calling on behalf of God's children?

People: Yes, we are ready! Let us worship God.

Hymn "Bring Many Names"

(see end of this section for music handout)

Opening Prayer

O Holy One, we know you by many different names and worship you in many different ways. Yet together we believe that you alone are the source and meaning of our existence, and it is your call that we must heed. Help us in this time together to hear your call to help the children...to help them be ready to learn and to succeed.

Disturb our hearts with the harsh reality of poverty, sickness, and violence confronting so many children today and hindering their readiness to learn and succeed. Trouble our consciences that millions of children are left in unsafe and unstimulating situations: in some child care programs, schools, and after school, delaying their readiness to learn and succeed.

Lift up our spirits with examples of people and services that make a difference and are getting children ready to learn and succeed. Strengthen our hands to reach out and our voices to speak up on behalf of children. Finally, we pray that you will inspire us by your divine presence to commit ourselves to serving your children so that each child may learn and succeed and live out the life for which you created them. **Amen.**

Readings and Prayers from Many Faiths

(Intersperse with music. See pages 112-119 for examples of readings, prayers, and reflections from a variety of faith traditions. Christian and Jewish resources are in Sections 4 and 5 respectively. Use some of these, or invite your leaders to select and write their own.)

Sermon/Message

Prayers of the People

(Before the prayers of the people, pass along the pews baskets containing crayons, pencil stubs, chalk, Band-Aids®, pennies, and pens. Invite each congregation member to take one item. These items will be referenced in the Prayers of the People. Afterward, encourage members to take the item home and to pray for those it symbolizes.)

Almighty God, the challenges facing children and those who care for and about them can seem so huge and so abstract that we lose touch with the reality. Help us to remember that the needs and prayers of each child, each parent, each teacher, each caring person are as real and individual to you as the items in our hands.

(Holding up a crayon)

And so we pray this day for the child care providers and parents who provide safe, warm, stimulating environments to spark a love of learning and fuel the curiosity of our youngest children as they scribble with crayons, pet the hamster, and try to taste the Play-Doh®. We pray especially for those providers who are underpaid and undervalued, for those parents who can't find quality, affordable care for their children while they work, and for the children whose potential is squelched in poor care. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a piece of chalk)

We pray for the teachers, covered in chalk dust, who devote themselves to educating our children and helping them flourish to their potential. For their dedication, imagination, and concern we give you thanks.

We pray especially for those teachers who have given up on themselves or on the children, those who feel unsafe, those who feel unappreciated. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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(Holding up a pencil stub)
We pray for students gripping pencils as they strive to learn, especially those faced with the challenges of disability, unsafe schools, low expectations from their parents, teachers, and selves, and inadequate resources. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

(Holding up a Band-Aid®)
We pray for children who are sick and injured, whose ability to learn is hampered by vision and hearing problems or illness. We pray especially for those children who don't have health insurance to get the care they need, and for their parents who worry about what to do, who rely on Band-Aids® when prevention or treatment is needed. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a penny)
We pray for the youths who are preparing for the world of work, that you will guide them in discovering their gifts and talents, skills and aptitudes, and surround them with teachers and adults who will get them ready to succeed. We pray especially for those young people who fear they will not be able to find work and earn a living, who don't have adults to help them prepare, and who despair of ever succeeding. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

(Holding up a pen)
We pray for our leaders in government, business, and the media, that the laws they write, the bottom lines that are inked, and the stories they pen will demonstrate an investment and priority in our children today for our future tomorrow. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Anthem

Act of Commitment

(If desired, children could develop a dramatic scene to accompany the reading of *Greenless Child* by Ann Weems (see below). Perhaps one child would be dressed in drab gray, while the other children are dressed in bright oranges, yellows, and other vibrant colors and carry streamers. These children could dance and swirl bright streamers while the child in gray sits quietly and forlornly. On the last line, she could look straight out at the congregation. Any number of people, of a variety of ages, could take turns reading the leader lines.)

Leader:

I watched her go uncelebrated into the second grade,
A greenless child,
Gray among the orange and yellow,
Attached too much to corners and to other people's sunshine.
She colors the rainbow brown
And leaves balloons unopened in their packages.
Oh, who will touch this greenless child?
Who will plant alleluias in her heart
And send her dancing into all the colors of God?
Or will she be left like an unwrapped package on the kitchen table—
Too dull for anyone to take the trouble?
Does God think we're her keeper?

Leader: Who will touch the greenless children, and work to see that every child enters school ready to learn, with strong early childhood experiences that are safe and nurturing?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will believe, and act on the belief, that all children can succeed and perform at high levels?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will work to support children, parents, teachers, and principals to make the best educational decisions possible?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will support quality teaching and let our teachers know their work is valued?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will see that children and schools have the resources they need to prepare every child to learn and succeed?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will support families in times of crisis so the needs of the children will not be neglected?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: Who will work to involve our whole community—health care providers, police, social service agencies, neighborhood groups, voluntary organizations, and other congregations—to see that our children get what they need to learn and succeed in school and beyond?

People: We will, with the grace of God.

Leader: God, who has called us into covenant with God and with one another, will be with us as we help all of the children, especially the greenless children, to learn and succeed and fulfill their God-given potential.

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Hymn "Bless Thou the Gifts"
(see end of this section for music handout)

Sending Forth

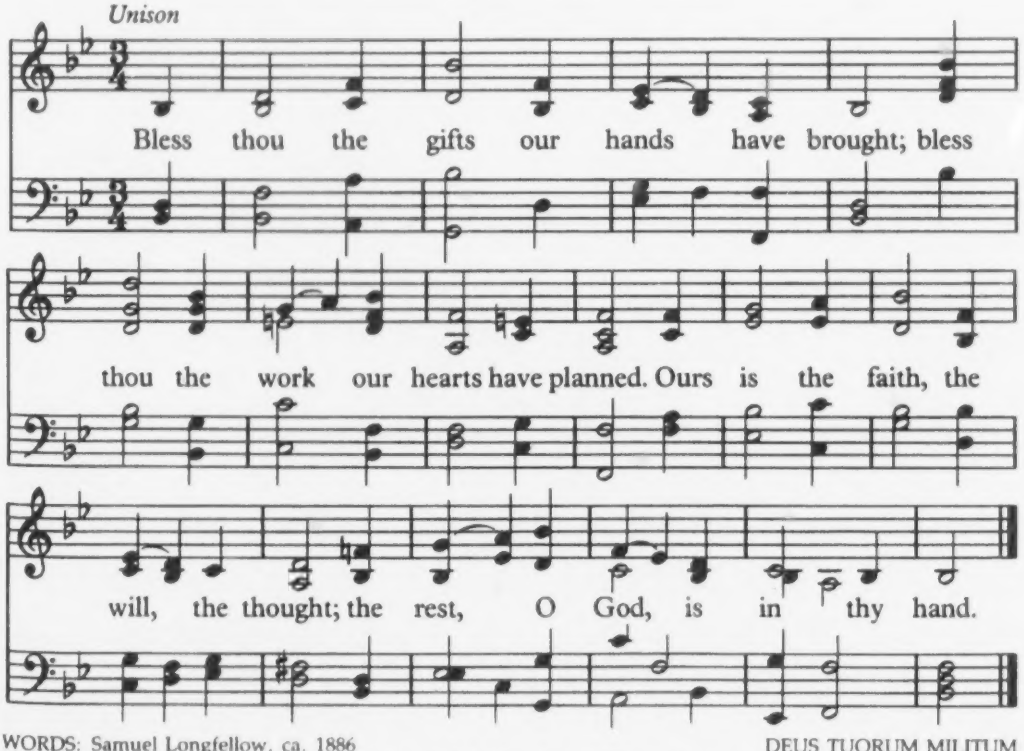
Friends, with God's grace we are ready, ready to go into the world and help all children learn and succeed.

We are ready, ready to spread the word of God's love for children.

We are ready, ready to support and uphold each other as we serve children and speak out for them.

Know that you go into a world ready and waiting, urgently waiting, for your loving service.

And know that God goes with you, even before you, into that world and work. **Amen.**

Bless Thou the Gifts

Unison
Bless thou the gifts our hands have brought; bless
thou the work our hearts have planned. Ours is the faith, the
will, the thought; the rest, O God, is in thy hand.

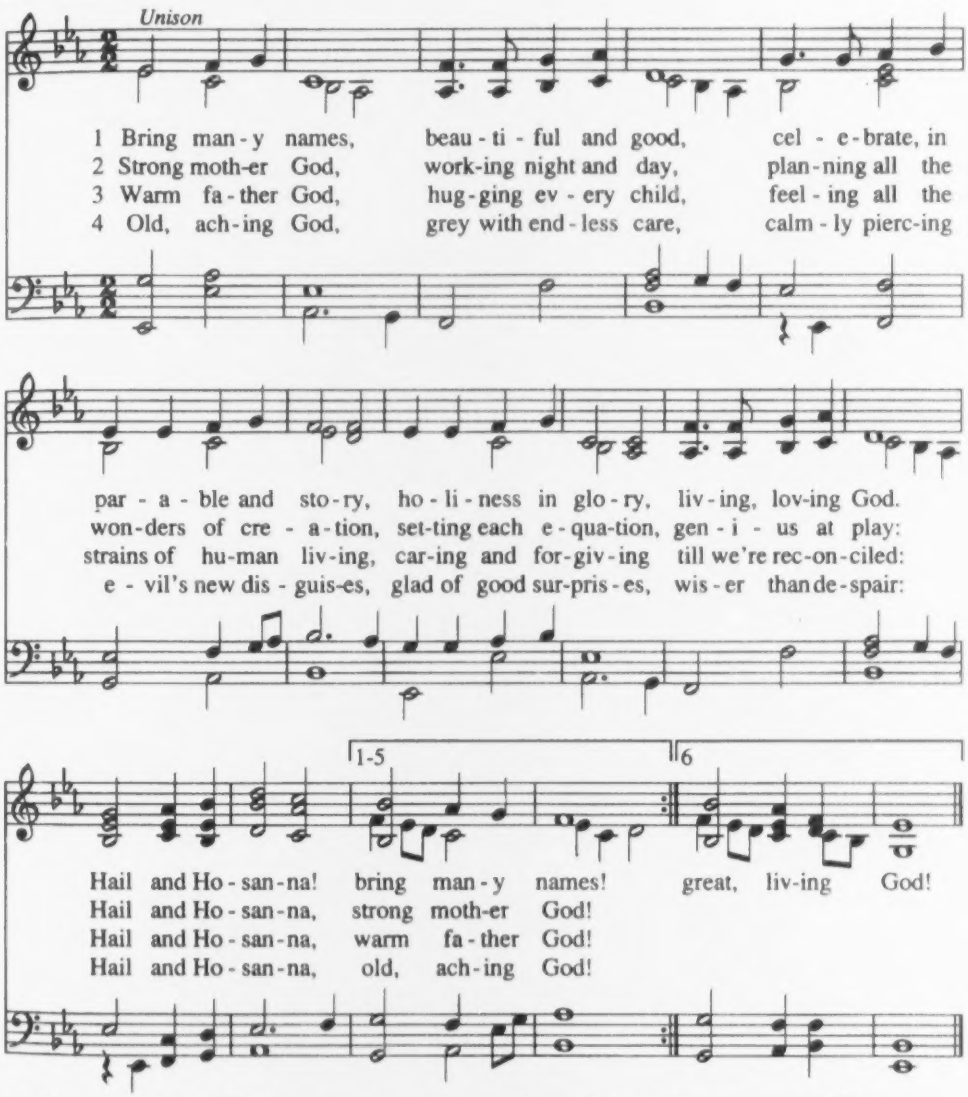
WORDS: Samuel Longfellow, ca. 1886
MUSIC: *Grenoble Antiphoner*, 1753; adapt. by Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906; harm. by Basil Harwood, 1908

DEUS TUORUM MILITUM
LM

Alt. tune: CANONBURY

117

Bring Many Names

Brian Wren, 1989 — *Gen. 1:27*

Unison
1 Bring man-y names, beau-ti-ful and good, cel-e-brate, in
2 Strong moth-er God, work-ing night and day, plan-ning all the
3 Warm fa-ther God, hug-ging ev-ery child, feel-ing all the
4 Old, ach-ing God, grey with end-less care, calm-ly pierc-ing
par-a-ble and sto-ry, ho-li-ness in glo-ry, liv-ing, lov-ing God.
won-ders of cre-a-tion, set-ting each e-qua-tion, gen-i-us at play:
strains of hu-man liv-ing, car-ing and for-giv-ing till we're rec-on-ciled:
e-vil's new dis-guis-es, glad of good sur-pris-es, wis-er than de-spair:
1-5
6
Hail and Ho-san-na! bring man-y names! great, liv-ing God!
Hail and Ho-san-na, strong moth-er God!
Hail and Ho-san-na, warm fa-ther God!
Hail and Ho-san-na, old, ach-ing God!

5 Young, grow-ing God, ea-ger,
on the move,
say-ing no to false-hood and
un-kind-ness,
cry-ing out for jus-tice,
giv-ing all you have:
Hail and Ho-san-na,
young, grow-ing God!

6 Great, liv-ing God, nev-er ful-ly known,
joy-ful dark-ness far be-yond our see-ing,
clos-er yet than breath-ing,
ev-er-last-ing home:
Hail and Ho-san-na,
great, liv-ing God!

The author states that aspects of the divine are revealed in our maleness, femaleness, youth, and age in a moving, growing matrix of life in God. The tune* Westchase *was composed especially for this text.

Tune: WESTCHASE 9.10.11.9.
Carlton Young, 1989

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Resources for Interfaith Children's Sabbaths

The following pages provide resources from a variety of faith traditions: the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Native American traditions, Shinto, Sikhism, and Unitarian Universalism. For each tradition, there is a passage from sacred texts or other writings central to the tradition, a prayer, and a reflection. For Christian and Jewish resources, please draw from the extensive materials provided elsewhere in this book.

These resources may be used in an interfaith Children's Sabbath service, to spark a Children's Sabbath in congregations of these traditions, or to enrich the Children's Sabbath of congregations from other traditions. They also may be used in an interfaith educational program you develop for your Children's Sabbath.

The Baha'i Faith

A Baha'i Reading

The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favour of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory. If a child be trained from his infancy, he will, through the loving care of the Holy Gardener, drink in the crystal waters of the spirit and of knowledge, like a young tree amid the rolling brooks. And certainly he will gather to himself the bright rays of the Sun of Truth, and through its light and heat will grow ever fresh and fair in the garden of life.

—From *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha*

Baha'i Prayers

O God! Educate these children. These children are the plants of Thine orchard, the flowers of Thy meadow, the roses of Thy garden. Let Thy rain fall upon them; let the Sun of Reality shine upon them with Thy love. Let Thy breeze refresh them in order that they may be trained, grow and develop, and appear in the utmost beauty. Thou art the Giver. Thou art the Compassionate.

—Abdu'l-Baha, from *Prayers For Young Baha'is* (Compiled from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, the Bab, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and the Greatest Holy Leaf)

O God! Protect these children, graciously assist them to be educated and enable them to render service to the world of humanity. O God! These children are pearls, cause them to be nurtured within the shell of Thy loving-kindness.
Thou art the Bountiful, the All-Loving.

—Abdu'l-Baha, from *Prayers For Young Baha'is*

A Baha'i Reflection

Philosophy of Baha'i Education

Among the greatest objectives of humanity is the education and training of children. This education ensures human progress, and prepares each soul for its entry into the next level of existence.
Education must therefore be divine as well as material. Spiritual education embodies those virtues or attributes which, when enkindled in the hearts and minds of children, not only guide their morals, but also enhance their material education. 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke of this dual necessity, and its benefit: "If...the child be trained to be both learned and good, the result is light upon light."

—Selections from the *Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha*

The Baha'i writings state that, before all else, children must be taught to love and obey God. This love and obedience is represented to a great extent in a child's relationship with his or her parents and in service to humankind. Because service to the world of humanity is the highest station to which a person can aspire, spiritual education programs must have service to the world of humanity as both a foundation and an outcome.

—From *Summary of the Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education* by the National Baha'i Education Task Force

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Buddhism

Venerable Dr. Chung Ok Lee
Won Buddhism United Nations Office
New York, NY

A Buddhist Reading

If educational institutions are narrowly focused or their spirit is confined by the boundary of self and others, then the world's civilization will be held back. Our aim is to advance the world's civilization by expanding educational institutions, transcending the boundary of self and others, widely educating future generations, and enabling all human beings to lead an ideal life.

1) As we have entered an era when the defects of education are removed, we ought to educate the children of others as if they were our own children whether or not we have children of our own. For the realization of this ideal, we must support educational institutions as far as we can and we must educate as many children as we can as if they were our own children.

2) A nation and society must establish a wide variety of educational institutions and carry out the educational plan successfully.

3) In religious orders, societies, nations, and the world, those who carry out the ideal of education the children of others should be recognized and rewarded for their meritorious deeds.

—From the *Scripture of Won Buddhism*

A Buddhist Prayer

May Dharmakaya Buddha nurture in us concentration, wisdom, and compassion.

We pray everyone becomes emboldened in heart to see the path that leads to love and peace.

May we spend more time in meditation and silence to see the truth: the truth about ourselves, the truth about others, and the truth about the universe for the benefit of the earth community.

Let us find the faith and courage to plant seeds of hope for children and thus flourish as one Family in One World.

May we recognize interdependency and interconnectedness: that humanity is one family and the world is the house we share. May we become co-workers on earth among congregations and communities to foster the quality of children's life. May the 1999 Children's Sabbath deepen and strengthen our love for all children.

A Buddhist Reflection

Education, Children, and Responsibility

Buddhists believe in Law of Causality and Rebirth. This understanding invites us to have long-term vision of past, present, and future generations. According to the concept of rebirth, it is our own duties and responsibilities to educate and protect future generations since we want to come back to a happier house and more enlightened society. Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to create a loving and nurturing environment for children. Since future generations will become our future parents, it is crucial to provide good education and health care for them. It is especially critical to give quality education for all girl children of future generations because they will become our future mothers. The quality of their life and education will have direct impact on our future.

We must understand that the education, health, and welfare of all children is our shared responsibility. The Scripture of Won Buddhism stresses that in order to enhance the world's civilization and endow all human beings with a blessed life, the public is to educate all younger generations, expanding the educational opportunity for spiritual, mental, and physical growth and transcending the boundary between oneself and others. Transforming these words into practice, schools, congregations, community, and government must address the special needs of children, especially those that fall beyond existing safety nets. To eradicate the problems plaguing young people, we must unite, at a grassroots level for change. If we can replace our disbelief and disillusion with faith and courage, entering a level of selflessness, we will awaken ourselves to the fact that our youth is our future, and our future is hopeful.

Hinduism

Hindu Readings

I am firmly seated in the hearts of all. From Me comes knowledge and memory and the departing of doubts. I am the Knower and Knowledge of the Vedas. I am the author of Vedanta (the sacred Upanishads and their teachings, the means to spiritual salvation liberation).

—From the *Bhagavad Gita*, XV.15 (read as Krishna speaking)

Oh Brahman Supreme! Formless and colorless are you. But in mystery, through your power you transform your light and radiance into many forms and colors in creation. You bring forth the creation and then withdraw them to yourself. Fill us with the grace of your auspicious thoughts and vision....You are in the woman, in the man. You are in the young boy, in the youthful maiden. You are in the old man who walks with his staff...You are in the dark butterfly, in the green parrot with red eyes...You are without beginning, infinite, beyond time and space. All the worlds had their origins in you.

—From *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, IV.1-4

Hindu Prayers

Sri Guru Pranama

I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, who has opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance, with the torchlight of knowledge.

Rig Veda, III-62-10

We meditate upon that adorable holy Light of the resplendent Life-Giver Savitar. May He stimulate and inspire our intellects.

—Excerpted from *A Sourcebook for Earth's Community of Religions*. Used with permission of the publisher.

A Hindu Reflection

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most ambitious, comprehensive, and laudable effort to protect, preserve, and enlarge the welfare of children. The quality of human life in the twenty-first century will depend almost entirely on what the world community will do to its children today. In the classical Hindu tradition, however, it is not simply [a matter] of rights but a question of duty, obligation, and virtue which has characterized human relations in Hindu society. [This] is the overarching principle that should govern relations between persons and collectives.

—Dr. Anand Mohan Hindu

Islam

Amir Al-Islam
The Muslim Center for Civilizational Dialogue
New York, NY

An Islamic Reading

Read! In the name of the Lord and Cherisher, Who created—created human beings from a [mere] clot of congealed blood: Read! And thy Lord is Most Beautiful, He who taught the use of the pen, taught man that which he knew not."

—From the text of the *Holy Qur'an*, (Chapter 96 verses 1-5)

These were the first verses of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, which is an indication of the importance that Islam places on knowledge of education, particularly for children. The training of children is one of the most sacred acts in Islam, and one that is said to be particularly pleasing to Allah. Throughout all its chapters and verses, the Qur'an emphasizes the significance of knowledge and encourages Muslims to learn and to acquire knowledge, not only of God's laws and religious injunctions, but also of the world of God's creation. The Qur'an is replete with verses inviting human beings to use their intellect, to ponder, to think and to know, for the goal of human life is to discover the Truth. It places the gaining knowledge as the highest religious activity and one that is most pleasing to God.

Islamic Prayers

"O Allah! You are our Creator. You are our provider and sustainer. All things are in Your hands and all authority rests with You and You alone. You have no helpers and need no assistance. Without Your guidance and light, we are in darkness. Help us. Without Your help, we are helpless. We depend solely on You."

"O Allah! You know that the children are our future, and we have not done what you have commanded us to do. Have mercy on us and overlook our faults. Protect the children, Allah, for surely you are the only protector. Give us the wisdom and the strength to work together for the welfare of all of our beloved children. O Allah! Save the children."

An Islamic Reflection

Philosophy of Islamic Education

Islam is a way of life based on knowledge of and belief in the oneness of God, an understanding of God's laws and religious teachings, and a commitment to implement those instructions in one's life. These teachings are embodied in the sacred text of the Holy Qur'an. For Muslims, the Qur'an is the actual Word of God revealed through the archangel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad(s) and it is the source of all Islamic doctrines and ethics. Muhammad (God's peace and blessings be upon him), the last Prophet of God, was entrusted with explaining, interpreting, and living the teachings of the Qur'an. This body of teachings and practices is embodied in literature that Muslims call Hadith.

The Hadith literature is full of references to the importance of knowledge and education. Prophet Muhammad(s) said, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave." And these teachings have echoed throughout the history of Islam and have inspired Muslims to seek knowledge wherever they can.

According to Islam, education is obligatory for every Muslim, male and female. And the primary objective of education is to teach human beings about the nature of their existence and the objective for their creation, which is to worship and obey God in all of their affairs. Muslims understand that the most important knowledge is that which teaches about the oneness of Almighty God, His laws and religious injunctions. However, Muslims are also exhorted to study the world of nature. The Qur'an constantly refers to the importance of seeing, contemplating, and reasoning about the world of creation and its diverse phenomena.

It is critical that we understand that the education, health and welfare of children are our collective responsibility. Children represent the hope of our future, and it is critical that we educate them properly in order to prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead. In Islam, proper education entails teaching children first to love and obey God. This is the foundation of their learning and provides them with understanding of their relationship and obligation to humanity.

Many children in America are suffering from neglect, which threatens to undermine our society's future. If we expect to survive as a human family, we must embrace all children, particularly those unfortunate ones who are on the margins of society.

Native American Traditions

A Native American Hymn

(Traditional Choctaw, sung to the tune of "Amazing Grace.")

Chocktaw:

1. Shee-lom-bish Ho-lee-to-pah-mah!
Ish meen-tee pol-lah chah,
Hah-tahk eel-buh-shah pee-ah hah
Ish pee yok-pah-lah-shkee.

2. Pee chok-osh no-see ah-tok-mah
Ahnt ish ok-chuh-lah-shkee,
Ish pee yo-hee-ee-cheek-bah-no;
Fe cheem ah-uh-neh-shkee.

3. Shee-lom-bish Ho-lee-to-pah mah!
Peem ah-nok-fee-lah huht
Ok-theel-it kuh-nee-uh ho-kah,
Ish-pee on to mah-shkee.

4. Pee chok-ush nok-hahk-lo yo-kah
Ahnt pee ho-po-luh-chee;
Fel ah-uh-shuh-chee-kah yo-kah,
Ish pee kah-sho-fah-shkee.

English:

(English paraphrase by Harry Folsom)

1. Come, O Holy Spirit! Come to us who are poor in spirit. Bless us!

2. Come and awaken our hearts. Give us your peace, we implore you.

3. O Holy Spirit! Our minds are clothed in darkness. Enlighten us!

4. Our hearts are filled with sorrow. Come and comfort us, sinners that we are. Cleanse us!

A Native American Prayer

O Great Spirit,
Whose breath gives life to the world and
whose voice is heard in the soft breeze,
We need your strength and wisdom.
May we walk in beauty.
May our eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.
Make us wise so that we may understand what you have taught us.
Help us to learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.
Make us always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes
So when life fades, as the fading sunset, our spirits may come to you without shame.

A Native American Reflection

The whole community sits around a circle called a Medicine Wheel. Around that wheel are representatives of all the different aspects of the community. In the East, there's the fool. In the West, there's the witch. In the South, there's the hunter. In the North, there's the creator. Others positioned around the circle are the shaman, the politician, etc. And in the center of the circle is the children's fire. Next to the children's fire sit the grandfather and grandmother.

If you want to build a condominium in the community of Spirit Lake, you have to enter the Medicine Wheel in the East, at the position of the fool. The Question you ask is, "May I build a condo on Spirit Lake?" The fool takes your question, turns it around backwards and asks, "What would Spirit Lake say about such a condo?" You then have to take the question the fool gives you to everyone around the Medicine Wheel. Each will respond to you according to their position in the community. The last people you must ask the question to are the grandmother and grandfather who guard the children's fire. If these two decide that the request is not good for the children's fire, then the answer is "no." They are the only ones in the circle who have veto power. The concept of the ultimate question is simple. Does it hurt or help the children's fire? If it can pass the test of the children's fire, then it can be done.

—Excerpted from materials by Congregations Concerned for Children. This story was told to Magaly Rodriguez Mossman by Robin Van Doren, who heard it from elders of the Hopi nation.

Shintoism

A Shinto Reading and Reflection

Shintoism believes it is important to transmit faith to children. Parents are taught that a goal in faith should be to rectify their own minds and nurture good children.

Konko Kagamitaro (the fourth patriarch of Konkokyo) has expressed the essence of parent-child relations in the following terms:

Both father and mother
And child as well, must be born and raised as one
Father, mother, and child.

While this simple verse speaks of the father, mother, and child being born together, it doesn't refer to literal simultaneous birth, but rather to the fact that the relationships involved all come about at one and the same time. Accordingly, the child must grow at the same time—and at the same rate—as the parent grows. In Shinto today, children are viewed as beings in relation to parents; the perception is thus that the "problems of children" are at one and the same time the "problems of parents."

—The Very Rev. Tatsuo Miyake–Shinto–WCRP President and Chief Senior Minister Designated, Konko Church of Izuo, Japan. From *Today's Child* produced by the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

Sikhism

Amrit Kaur
Guru Gobind Singh Foundation
Washington, DC

A Sikh Reading

The Lord is my Mother and Father. He it is who blesses me with sustenance.
And, the Lord takes care of me. For I am the child of God.
He abandons me never and feeds me steadily.
And minds not my demerits and hugs me to His bosom.
And he blesses me with all I seek, yea, He the Bliss-giving Father.
and He has blessed me with the Wares of Wisdom, yea, the riches of the Name, and
Made me worthy of Himself.
And made me a partner (of His Grace) with the Guru, and now I possess all joys.
May my Lord forsake me not; yea, He, who is my All powerful Lord.

—From the *Guru Granth Sahib*

A Sikh Hymn

You are the Father, the Mother, we are Your children
In Your grace lies our whole joy
No one knows Your limits, O Lord,
You, the maker of our destiny, are
the highest of the high.
All Your creation is strung on Your thread.
And all you have created is in Your command.
You alone know Your end and state.
So, Nanak, Your servant, is forever sacrifice unto You.

A Sikh Reflection

Sikh religion started in India in the fifteenth century. The founder was called Guru Nanak who was succeeded by nine other Gurus who radiated the same divine light that manifested in Guru Nanak. Sikh scripture is a magnificent collection of spiritual poetry, rendered in Classical raags. Liturgy and hymns are inseparable in Sikh scripture. This massive volume of inspirational and devotional hymns is revered by the Sikhs as Guru (Divine Master) and is addressed as Guru Granth Sahib. Hence kirtan (Sikh way of singing hymns) an integral part of worship. Sikh places of worship are called Gurdwara. There is no Sabbath Day designated in Sikhism. One is supposed to have constant remembrance of God always, though there are special morning and evening prayers.

Sikh children are taught these prayers at an early age. They are also taught kirtan (hymn singing) in classical raags to the accompaniment of musical instruments (mainly harmonioum and Tabla). In Gurdwaras, classes are held for children to teach them Punjabi, the language of scripture and Sikh philosophy. They are also taught the Sikh history. At many places summer camps are conducted to enthuse the children, to educate them, and to inspire them to be good Sikhs and equally good citizens. These camps are held in natural environments to bring them in tune to the Creator and also to make them aware of the abundant blessing of Nature, for the Sikhs believe that this whole universe is the manifestation of the same divine light who is the Creator, Nourisher, and Protector. Strong emphasis is laid on character building and in developing leadership qualities. Sikhism believes in the equality of mankind and advocates strongly that all the human race is one. To perpetuate this concept Sikh youths are sent to inter-religious youth retreats and camps.

In some educational centers many modern techniques, such as computers, slide shows, and live discussions are employed for the purpose of education. Since gurdwaras are the center of religious growth, many times youths are encouraged to conduct, participate in, and perform in regular congregations. In Sikhism, there is equality of sexes so male and female children alike can participate in all the events. Children can lead in prayer service, sing hymns, recite anecdotes from the biographies of the Gurus, and perform other tasks required of them. Like all other religious communities, Sikhism believes that children will be the torch-bearers for tomorrow and they have to be trained in the ways of religious traditions while being part of the mainstream American society.

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Unitarian Universalism

Kim McDonald and the Rev. Jose Ballester
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Cambridge, MA

A Unitarian Universalist Reading

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you, for life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The Archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and bends you with might that the arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness.

—By Kahlil Gibran from *Singing the Living Tradition*

A Unitarian Universalist Prayer

Giver of all life and love,
You, who are creator of all natural beauty,
You, who are creator of all living things,
We your children thank you for all you have given us.
Help us to dedicate our lives to nurturing children;
To instill in them the sense of value they need;
To design and build for them communities of love.
Help us to be responsible for meeting their needs;
To teach by example so they may grow in their own right;
To provide the resources to improve and sustain their lives.
Help us to be sensitive listeners, and respectful of differing opinions;
To work with patience and gain understanding;
To learn from our children how to live with loving hearts.
Giver of all life and love,
May we share all your gifts with the children,
And may they share theirs, now and in the future.

A Unitarian Universalist Reflection
The Great End in Religious Instruction

The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own;

Not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;

Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth;

Not to form an outward regularity but to touch inward springs;

Not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect or peculiar notions,

But to prepare them for impartial, conscientious judging of whatever subjects may be offered to their decision;

Not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought;

Not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment.

In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life.

—By William Ellery Channing from *Singing the Living Tradition*

Section 7

Activity Ideas for All Faiths

On the Children's Sabbath, plan a range of activities to engage all ages in responding to the needs of children that were lifted up in the service of worship. Provide opportunities for people to put their faith into action to improve the lives of children.

Learn More and Raise Awareness

Hold a Forum on Getting Children Ready to Learn and Succeed

Invite a panel of speakers to address different facets of the topic, including early childhood learning (at home, in child care programs, in Head Start, and in after-school programs), strong schools, and the challenges to children's learning posed by poverty, violence, and lack of health care. Encourage each speaker to talk about the problems, solutions, and ways that people can help. Possible speakers include: teachers, school administrators, students, child care providers, Head Start teachers, parents (both those who work outside the home and in it), health care providers, staff or volunteers from an after-school program, and legislators.

Honor the People Who Help Our Children Learn

Plan a celebration to recognize and support congregation members who are child care providers, Head Start teachers, and school staff. Also acknowledge the irreplaceable role that parents play as children's first and most important teachers. Perhaps have the children make, in advance, special buttons or ribbons to give to the honorees.

Host a Faith in Action Fair

Arrange for a variety of organizations and programs to set up tables with information about opportunities to volunteer, donate, or advocate. Include opportunities to help children through congregation-sponsored programs and through programs run by community organizations. For example, the Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston (IMGH) organized a fair, and gave individuals pledge cards. They filled in their commitments and then turned in the cards. Later, IMGH contacted individuals to support them in fulfilling their commitments to children.

Create a "Legacy Wall"

In the room where the congregation gathers for socializing or activities on the Children's Sabbath, post a long sheet of mural paper on the wall, with the following quote from Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune written across the top in large letters: *"I leave you love. I leave you hope. I leave you the challenge of developing confidence in one another. I leave you a thirst for education. I leave you a respect for the use of power. I leave you faith. I leave you racial dignity. I leave you also a desire to live harmoniously with your fellow man. And I leave you finally a responsibility to our young people."*

Underneath the quote, write "How will you give these gifts to children?" Leave crayons and markers nearby, and invite congregation members to write their responses to the question on the paper. Responses under "I leave you faith" might include praying for children and accompanying the youth group on a trip. Responses to "I leave you a thirst for education" might include reading to or with children and volunteering in a classroom. Responses to "I leave you a respect for the use of power" might include talking with young people about Congress and legislation when it comes up on the evening news, or planning a joint visit to a legislator's office, or conversations about how to deal peacefully and effectively with a school bully.

Tour a Program Serving Children

Take interested people on a tour of a child care program, Head Start site, public school, or after-school program. If your congregation houses a child care, Head Start, or after-school program, that is a good place to start. Arrange for an administrator, a teacher, a parent, and a child to talk to your group. It is best to plan the visit for a day that the program or school will be in session. Prepare questions to ask the speakers, such as the population they serve, their greatest needs and challenges, their successes, and what kind of support (donations, volunteers, advocacy) would help them serve children better.

Mark the Importance of Reading

Involve all ages in making bookmarks. Supply stiff paper (cardstock or file folders) to be cut into strips for bookmarks, scissors, markers and crayons to write on the bookmarks, stickers or stars to decorate, clear adhesive paper to cover the bookmarks (alternatively, rent or borrow a laminating machine), hole-punch and yarn for attaching a tassel. Possible quotes for the bookmarks include: "I am wonderfully made!" "Children are important at [name of your congregation]" "Reading: A Path to Learning and Success."

Express Gratitude to Those Who Helped You Learn and Succeed

Offer the opportunity for people of all ages to thank the individuals who have helped them learn and succeed. Provide an assortment of note cards, paper, envelopes, pens, crayons, and markers, and invite people to write a note of thanks to someone who helped them to learn and succeed. It could be someone in their life now, or a long-ago teacher or mentor. Encourage people to write someone even if they don't have their address—they can either do some detective work later to track down that teacher from years ago, or simply find that writing the note is a valuable experience of gratitude even if it never gets mailed.

Reach Out

Fill a Gap

Contact a school, child care program, Head Start program, or after-school program and find out what needs they have that your congregation could fill. This may include collecting supplies such as art materials and books or donating computers. Publicize the needed items in advance of the Children's Sabbath, and then collect them on the Children's Sabbath weekend. If possible, display photographs of the children from the school or program. You also may want to invite staff, parents, and children from the selected program to participate in your Children's Sabbath.

Arrange Fix-Up Fun

Arrange to fix up a school, child care center, or Head Start classroom. Find one that would welcome a fresh coat of paint, playground clean-up, or a new garden. For example, Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, painted classrooms in a local elementary school. Schedule the fix-up for the Children's Sabbath weekend, and let congregation members know in advance so that they can sign up and bring the needed tools, supplies, and a change of clothes. Be sure to take "before" and "after" pictures of the site, as well as lots of photos of members during the fixing up process. Display the photos the following week.

Give the Gift of Reading

Collect quality children's books to distribute through health clinics, hospitals (books for babies could be given to new parents to encourage them to read to their child from the start), child care programs, Head Start programs, and schools. Before the Children's Sabbath, call the organization and ask if they would like to receive such a donation, and find out the age range of the children they serve. Then invite congregation members to bring in new books to donate on the Children's Sabbath. Encourage them to select books that feature illustrations depicting a range of races and ethnicities. If possible, have a small group deliver the books on the Children's Sabbath weekend as part of the activities.

Set up a Reading Corner

One of the best ways to foster children's learning is to read to them and to encourage them to read. On the Children's Sabbath, set up a cozy reading corner where children can gather to have books read to them. Invite a range of people to be the readers, including parents, seniors, and youths. If possible, place the reading corner in or near the room where everyone gathers after the service, so that the children feel like part of the activity. Consider leaving the Reading Corner up for the long-term. Remind parents, through a poster or flyers to hand out, that reading to their children from the earliest ages on is vital to learning.

Speak Up

"Be a Voice for Children" at a Letter-writing Table

Set up a table with writing supplies (paper, envelopes, stamps, and pens) and sample letters or information that assist people in advocating on behalf of children. See suggestions (page 124) and a sample letter (page 125) in this manual. The week before the Children's Sabbath, visit CDF's web site at *www.childrensdefense.org* for the latest action alerts. Or call our Religious Affairs Division at (202) 662-3589. Invite members to write letters to members of Congress calling for support for and improvement in child care, Head Start, health care, and education. Invite those who wish to read their letters aloud to others gathered, to share their passion and concern. Include drawing paper and crayons so that young children can draw pictures depicting their hopes or concerns for children. Or, have younger children dictate their letters. Older children and youths can write their own letters. Consider having a delegation from the congregation (including children, youths, and adults) hand-deliver the letters to your member of Congress in the local, district office. If you do this, use the occasion to focus media attention on children's concerns. (See the suggestions on pages 18-21 for contacting the media to solicit coverage.)

Plan a Visit to your Legislators

Meeting with legislators face to face is one of the most effective ways that you can be a witness for children and advocate on their behalf. However, such advocacy is new and intimidating for many people. Hold a session to explain the basics of meeting with legislators and to plan a visit to address children's needs. (Use the guide on pages 126 and 127 to help you plan your visit.) If possible, invite a speaker from an advocacy organization or a congregation member experienced in making lobbying visits to facilitate this planning session and to lead the group in its meeting with the legislator.

Write a Letter to the Editor

Have copies of local newspapers from the past few weeks. Encourage people to identify articles on children, education, child care, early childhood, health, poverty, violence, and other related issues. Then, invite them to write a letter to the editor which responds to the article and uses it as an opportunity to inform readers about the challenges facing children and needed responses. Print the four tips on page 124 on a poster or a flyer at the table so that people can refer to them while writing.

Tips on Writing a Letter to the Editor

(Adapted from *Reclaiming Our Democracy: Healing the Break Between People and Government* by Sam Harris)

1. Respond to a recent news story or editorial. A good letter might begin, "Your article on the new poverty statistics ("Poverty Rate is Increasing," Oct. 4) was excellent. Readers might want to know that...." You don't have to agree with the article, editorial, or column. Say respectfully whether you think they got the story right or not, and assert your views.
2. Make your letter short (no more than a few paragraphs, about 300 words) and legible. It should contain a few striking facts that might surprise an editor or a reader. ("Poverty impacts more than a family's pocketbook—it affects a child's health, safety, and ability to learn and succeed. A child living in poverty is more likely to....)
3. Use descriptive words which communicate how passionately you feel about the issue. Don't be dry. ("When I look into the trusting brown eyes of a child whose family has come to the Mytown Congregation food pantry, I know that the increasing poverty rate is counted not in numbers but in lives....")
4. Include your address and home and work numbers.

Tips on Writing a Letter to your Member of Congress

- **Be brief.** Address only one issue. A letter need not be longer than four or five sentences.
- **Be specific.** If you are writing about specific legislation, include its bill number or title.
- **Write your own letter,** adapting a sample letter as appropriate. Form letters do not receive the same attention as individually written letters.
- **Be positive and constructive.** Try to say something complimentary in the first paragraph. It is just as important to thank members of Congress for voting the right way as to criticize them for voting the wrong way.
- **Say in your own words** why the legislation matters to you and to children. Clearly state your reason for supporting or opposing the bill or issue you are writing about.
- **If you have particular knowledge or expertise, describe it.** Relating the bill to local or state conditions is especially effective.
- **If you wish, feel free to include a copy of a report,** a newsletter story, or a local survey to support your arguments. Don't presume that the legislator is aware of such information, even if you think it is common knowledge.
- **Be sure to sign your name legibly and include your address** so your representative or senator can respond.

Sample Letter Step By Step

The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Or: The Honorable _____
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator_____:

Or: Dear Representative_____:

1. Introduce Yourself. (My name is *Your Name* and I am a member of *Your Congregation* in *Your Town*.)

2. Share Your Concern For Children. (I am writing because I care about the millions of American children who lack the ingredients necessary to be ready to learn and ready to succeed. More than 14 million children live in poverty, more than 11 million children lack health care, 13 million young children are in child care, and 5 million children are left alone after school where they are at risk of unsafe behavior such as drinking, drug use, crime, violence, and too early sexual activity. Here in Yourtown, there is a waiting list for affordable child care at most programs, and there are few after-school programs to keep older children safe and occupied.)

3. Share Your Vision for Children. (I am committed to a community, state, and nation that ensures that all children are ready to learn and ready to succeed. Everyone—parents, congregations, schools, businesses, community, and government at all levels—has a role to play.)

4. Talk About the Solutions and Urge Action on Them. (Despite the magnitude of the problems affecting millions of children, there are proven, cost-effective ways to help assure that every child enters school ready to learn and ready to succeed. Safe, affordable, quality child care programs and Head Start programs give children positive early learning experiences that help them enter school ready to learn. After-school programs help keep older children engaged in productive activities and away from risky behavior such as drinking, drug use, too early sexual activity, violence, and crime. And health care for children of all ages is vital to their learning in and out of school. I hope that you will vote for [number and title of legislation] to [describe what it would do, such as support and strengthen the quality and affordability of child care or provide block grant funds to states and communities to develop after-school programs that keep young people safe and put them on the path to learning and success].) *Visit the Children's Defense Fund's website at* www.childrensdefense.org *for the latest information on legislation and needed action. Or call the Religious Affairs Division at (202) 662-3589.*

5. Thank the Representative and Ask for a Reply. (Thank you for your attention to my concern that every child enter school ready to learn and ready to succeed. I look forward to your reply informing me of how you will address these concerns.)

Sincerely,

Your name
Your address
Your telephone number

How to address your envelope:

The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Or: The Honorable _____
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Meeting With Your Legislators

Before Your Visit

Begin planning for your visit. Don't worry if you have butterflies in your stomach at the thought of meeting with your legislator for the first time. It would be unusual if you didn't. Know that the best way to communicate with your legislator is to make a personal visit, and you probably will enjoy the experience—and the legislator will appreciate the time you spent communicating your views. So, take a deep breath and begin planning! First, decide on the issues you want to discuss.

Make an appointment. When making an appointment, explain what issue you would like to discuss. If the legislator is unavailable, the aide who deals with your issue often will be knowledgeable and influential in helping to form the member's views. Don't feel slighted if you end up meeting with the aide. He or she can be very influential and, if your meeting goes well, may also encourage your legislator to meet with you in person the next time.

Do your homework. Study the legislator's voting record on a number of issues, using CDF's nonpartisan Congressional Voting Record and other sources, so you can comment on something positive, if possible, and know if the particular issue is one on which the legislator tends to agree or disagree with you. If there is a bill that interests you, know its status and whether your legislator has taken a position on it.

Remember the experts! Parents, grandparents, service providers, educators, religious and business leaders, police officers, doctors and nurses, and others who witness children's needs on a daily basis are children's best advocates. They really are the experts when it comes to how bills and policies will affect children, and it's important that policy makers have a wide variety of people to call upon when they have questions about their work's impact on children. Children's advocacy groups often seek out these everyday experts to present the most compelling information during legislative visits. Tell of personal experiences you have had, if possible, to illustrate your point.

Be prepared. Before meeting with the legislator or aide, plan and organize your presentation, and practice what you are going to say. If you are going with other people to the meeting, get together beforehand to make sure that you all have the same purpose. Take along helpful information to back up your arguments: newspaper articles about the problems children face, statistics, or a fact sheet. (CDF can provide some of the information you need. Call the Religious Affairs Division at 202-662-3589 or visit CDF's website at *www.childrensdefense.org*.)

During Your Visit

Make your message concise. You may think your meeting is for 30 minutes and then arrive to find the representative's schedule so tight that you get only five minutes. Know exactly what you want to say and be prepared to say it quickly, if circumstances demand that.

Present solutions. People often feel overwhelmed by problems they consider too massive and diverse for corrective action, so don't just talk about the problem. Share one or two concrete ideas for ways to improve the lives of children in your community. Tell your representatives what it will take to ensure that each child enters school ready to learn and ready to succeed.

Talk about what works. Using success stories of real children and families who are being helped by Head Start, child care, job training, or health insurance will strengthen your argument and counter claims that all government programs are ineffective.

Search for common ground. Don't be exclusive or judgmental. Keeping in mind the wide range of viewpoints in Congress and in every community and state legislature, frame your messages carefully to include words and themes that will reach new audiences and persuade them to become new allies. Children's advocates care as much as anyone about efficiency, accountability, fiscal responsibility, and personal responsibility. Use themes like these to frame your message.

Be honest. It's fine to say you don't know the answer to a question and to promise to provide information later, by phone, fax, or mail. This also gives you another opportunity to contact the office.

Following Your Visit

Build a relationship. The better your communication, the more seriously you will be taken, and the more willing the representative and his or her staff will be to rely upon you and your judgments.

- Follow-up your visit with a letter thanking the legislator for the time spent listening to your concerns. Enclose any documentation you had agreed to provide to bolster your position, and briefly restate your views.
- Send articles, write letters with further information, or offer assistance in thinking through solutions that could work in your community.
- Call periodically with updates.
- Invite the representative or the staff person who handles children's issues to speak before your congregation or a community group in which you are involved.
- Invite the representative to visit a successful child-serving program with which you work, such as a child care program, after-school program, or Head Start class.

Show broad support for your concerns. If your legislator or aide disagrees or is noncommittal, don't threaten or argue after you have made your case because it is counter-productive. A better strategy is to plan another visit with others to show more community support for your position, to put together a bunch of letters from constituents, or to think of another tactic such as a letter to the editor. Persistence often pays.

Watch how your legislator votes and respond. If the legislator votes with your position on the issue, recognize that vote with a written "thank-you." Such recognition may influence his or her next vote on children's issues. It also lets your legislator know that you are watching closely. If the legislator votes against your position, write or call to express your disappointment, and urge reconsideration of the issue the next time it comes up for a vote.

Section 8

Follow Up Actions and Resources for All Faiths

The Children's Sabbath should serve as a catalyst or inspiration that stimulates new, long-term action by your congregation to improve the lives of children. Make sure that your Children's Sabbath commitment does not simply "end" on the weekend itself, but extends throughout the year.

Many of the ideas below have organizations or publications listed that can provide more in-depth information. Three comprehensive resources that may also be useful in guiding your congregation toward follow-up actions are: *Welcome the Child: A Child Advocacy Guide for Churches* (for Christian congregations), *Social Action Manual: A Practical Guide for Organizing and Programming Social Action in the Synagogue* (for Jewish congregations), and *A Catholic Campaign for Children: Parish Resource Manual* (for Roman Catholic parishes). See the Resource section for ordering information.

Learn More and Raise Awareness

Publicize and support activities sponsored by schools and early childhood programs. Let congregation members know about concerts, performances, fund-raisers, and other school, child care, and Head Start program activities and encourage their support and participation. This will build bridges and a sense of continuity for the children and youths, to bring together their congregational family and their school and weekday program experiences. Show that you care about what happens to your congregation's children during the week as well as on the weekend.

Find out how you can help get application forms or flyers to families for the new Child Health Insurance Program and Medicaid, programs that provide free health insurance for children in low- and moderate-income families. Uninsured children in families earning up to $53,400 a year qualify in most states. Call the Children's Defense Fund at 1-800-CDF-1200 x2 for more information and materials to involve your congregation in connecting eligible families with this important source of health insurance. You also can find information on your state's children's health insurance program and Medicaid on CDF's website: *www.childrensdefense.org/signup*

Celebrate success. Recognize students' school accomplishments, for instance through notices on a bulletin board, notes in the congregational bulletin or newsletter, announcements at an appropriate time during the service, or a celebratory coffee hour or *Oneg Shabbat*.

Arrange a tour of your community's public schools, child care programs, Head Start, and after-school programs. Plan to talk with administrators, teachers, students, and parents to hear their perspectives on the strengths and challenges facing the schools, and child care, Head Start, and after-school programs. After the tour, consider ways that your congregation can support the strengths and help meet the challenges. For more information about arranging site visits and CDF's Child Watch Program, call 202-628-8787.

Start a short-term book group or adult study class on *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* by Jonathan Kozol. Use the book as a springboard for discussion about the challenges to children's preparedness to learn and succeed. As a group, ask yourselves how the children in the book have been affected by poverty, violence, lack of health care, and lack of positive early learning at home, in child care, or in Head Start. Ask yourselves what you can do as individuals or as a congregation about the problems identified. If the book group or class is interested in continuing, *Among School Children* by Tracy Kidder would be a good choice for the next book. (See the Resources listed in this section for other possibilities.)

Reach Out

Start a tutoring program in your congregation, or arrange to connect volunteers from the congregation with an existing tutoring program in another congregation or the community. If you start your own program, look for a particular need to fill. For example, are there students with learning disabilities or other special needs for whom you could provide qualified tutors? Are the tutoring needs greatest for younger children or teens in your schools? Could you set up a foreign language tutoring program to help children with French or Spanish classes, or are there many students who speak other languages that need extra help with English?

Consider whether your congregation is able to provide a weekday child care program in your facilities. *Helping Churches Mind the Children: A Guide for Church-Housed Child Care Programs* is a resource for Christian congregations. The Jewish Child Care Association is a resource for Jewish congregations. (See Resource section for contact and ordering information).

Start or provide volunteers for a mentoring program, to provide one-on-one supportive friendships for children and youths. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America at 215-665-7778 is a national organization that supports mentoring.

Learning doesn't stop after school. Provide a rich, stimulating after-school program that helps young people continue learning and engage in productive activities. If your congregation can't sponsor its own program, partner with another congregation, or find ways to support an existing program. (See CDF's summer Freedom School and after-school curriculum guides).

Encourage congregation members to volunteer in classrooms of a school, child care program, Head Start, or after-school program, as an extra pair of hands for the teacher or for something more specific such as reading with the children.

Demonstrate a skill for students. Connect congregation members with a school, child care program, Head Start class, or after-school program to teach or demonstrate a particular skill to the students on a one-time basis. This may be more realistic for some members than an on-going tutoring or volunteer commitment.

Support struggling students. Recognize that school troubles constitute a real crisis for many children and parents. Offer clergy counseling and support as needed to children who have been held back a grade, are rejected by colleges or vocational preparation programs, or are having a hard time dealing with other serious disappointments or crises.

Facilitate involvement in Back-to-School Night. Make sure that parents in your community can attend Back-to-School night to promote their involvement in their child's school. Talk to parents, teachers, and community groups to learn what hinders parents from attending, and provide what is needed. This may include child care for siblings, transportation to the school, or even a free or low-cost hot dinner before Back-to-School night to encourage parents to attend. Consider offering similar support during parent-teacher conference week.

Sponsor vision and hearing screening or immunization clinics. Good health—especially vision and hearing—is important for students' learning, and children must be up-to-date on their immunizations in order to enroll in school. However, millions of children in the U.S. do not have any form of health insurance, public or private. Offer a free "back to school" immunization clinic and vision and hearing screening for children in the community. Work with

health professionals in your congregation to contact appropriate agencies for guidance. Publicize the clinic at community swimming pools and recreation programs, and anywhere else children and parents may be during the late summer.

Start a Freedom School. Freedom Schools provide summer programs for children ages 5 to 18 that offer nutritious meals (provided by the federal Summer Food Service Program), cultural enrichment, conflict resolution skills, and interaction with positive role models. The programs are run by college-age young people trained through the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute coordinated by the Black Community Crusade for Children. For more information about starting a Freedom School in your congregation, call 202-628-8787.

Speak Up

Advocate for affordable, accessible, quality child care and Head Start programs that help children get ready to learn. Join CDF's Child Care network to receive information and action alerts to help you communicate with your members of Congress. (See pages 124-127 for guidance on writing letters to the editor, writing letters to your legislators, and visiting your legislators to advocate). Call 202-628-8787 to be added to the network.

Be a voice in your community and state to help uninsured children get the health care they need so they are able to learn. States are currently putting the Child Health Insurance Program in place. Your voice is needed to let families know they are eligible and get them enrolled. For information about how you can help, contact CDF at 1-800-CDF-1200 x2.

Engage the congregation in school board concerns. Host school board candidate forums, publicize elections, highlight important issues docketed for upcoming meetings, and communicate key decisions made. Encourage congregation members to consider running for the school board. Even if your congregation is affiliated with a parochial or other religious school, remind congregation members that it is important to ensure that the public school system is strengthened so that all children can get the best education possible.

Convene a community coalition to strengthen schools. Convene a community coalition to support and strengthen the schools in your area. Invite other congregations, social service agencies, health care providers, police, neighborhood groups, and voluntary organizations to join.

Advocate for School Breakfasts. Advocate for your public schools to take advantage of the federal School Breakfast program so children will get the sound nutritional start to their day that will help them learn best. More and more studies show that a good breakfast helps children learn more and behave better in school. Some schools are serving breakfast free to all children because the advantages are so great. Make sure your schools have a breakfast program and are taking steps to get children to participate. For more information about how you can advocate on this concern, contact the Food Research and Action Center at 202-986-2200.

Advocate for the Summer Food Program. Make sure that your community offers the federal Summer Food program so that children who receive free or reduced-price lunches during the school year don't go hungry during the summer. (Also see the information above on Freedom Schools, programs structured around the Summer Food Program to ensure that children are fed in mind, body, and spirit throughout the summer.)

A Learning Environment

Suggestions for Making Your Congregation a Place of Learning and Success for Children

This year's Children's Sabbath looks at getting children ready to learn and succeed, with a particular focus on early childhood development, preschool programs, and education. It is important, however, that we also look "closer to home" to make sure that our congregations are also places that prepare children to learn and succeed through nurture and positive learning experiences. The following suggestions are starting points to ensure that your congregation is a learning environment. Look at your congregation's programs for children and youths—religious education programs as well as youth groups, retreats, and other activities—and consider these questions.

Understand Learning Differences

- Does your congregation appropriately and supportively accommodate children with learning disabilities dyslexia, cognitive, physical, and emotional disabilities?
- Has your staff—clergy, education staff, teachers, secretaries, congregation—been exposed to and had consciousness raised regarding variation in learning and responding?
- Does the staff lead the congregation in an environment that allows for inclusion of the diverse learner?
- Are teachers/staff members trained to provide experiences that help children with learning disabilities or other challenges to learn and succeed?
- Are religious education classes and services planned to encourage and incorporate a variety of learning methods?
- Are congregation members viewed as members of a support team for each other and are they open to providing the necessary supports to families and individuals with special needs?
- Are parents viewed as partners who can provide information about their children and as part of the leadership, planning, and support team guiding teachers?

Value Learning

- Do the children have an opportunity to share their learning with their parents?
- Do the children have an opportunity to share their learning with the congregation? Are their artwork and other projects displayed where the congregation can see them?
- Does the religious education program take place at a time that many children can participate?
- Is there a recognition ceremony at the end of the year celebrating the children's participation in, and completion of, the education program?
- Does your congregation celebrate children's secular education accomplishments, such as making the honor roll, moving on to the next grade, going off to college, or completion of a vocational education program? (Don't overlook the accomplishments of children who are not on "the college track;" celebrate young people who are preparing to enter the work world, too.)
- Does your congregation offer clergy support and counseling for children and parents who are wrestling with academic problems and disappointments, such as having to repeat a grade or not being accepted into college or a work education program?

Value Teaching

- Are the religious education teachers and others working with children and youths publicly recognized and thanked by the congregation?
- Are new volunteers recruited each year to avoid "burning out" the same teachers year after year?
- If the children's religious education program takes place during the service of worship, are the teachers remembered? (For instance, does someone bring them communion if appropriate in your tradition?)
- Do the teachers receive appropriate training, curriculum, and resources to help them do their job well?

Resources for Child Advocates

As you plan your Children's Sabbath, initiate new long-term commitments, or reinvigorate your ongoing efforts to improve the lives of children, draw upon the human and material resources available to you. In addition, look to your community and state children's advocacy and social service agencies for information about child care, Head Start, the school system, after-school programs, resources, and legislation. The social justice, governmental affairs, or human services divisions of your denomination or movement's national and regional offices can often provide you with resources, advocacy ideas, and policy statements to assist you in strengthening your efforts.

Following are resources from various religious organizations, as well as CDF and other organizations concerned with preparing children to learn and succeed.

Protestant Resources

The following four items can be ordered from the Ecumenical Child Care Network, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Suite 405, Chicago, IL 60631, or by calling 1-800-649-5443.

- *Called to Act: Stories of Child Care Advocacy in Our Churches.* This 1986 booklet provides poignant stories concerning how churches care for children; who needs child care; how we organize the church community; becoming a child care advocate and more.
- *Helping Churches Mind the Children: A Guide for Church-Housed Child Care Programs.* This booklet provides a format and practical suggestions for assessing the need for a congregational child care program and how to initiate, publicize and resource the program.
- *Partners in Family Child Care: Opportunities for Outreach: A Guide for Religious Congregations* by Margery Freeman. This guide can assist a congregation in assessing its need and resources for supporting family child care within the local congregation and community.
- *Policy Statement on Child Day Care.* Statement issued by the governing board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

Children and Poverty—The Bishop's Initiative, A Church for All God's Children. This 1998 initiative and call was issued by the United Methodist Church in response to the crisis among children and the impoverished. It invites congregations to undertake specific actions to make their churches more responsive to the needs of children and their families in the church and community while providing resources for understanding this current crisis. To learn more about The Bishop's Initiative and to obtain an information packet, call 1-800-305-9857.

Catholic Resources

The U.S. Catholic Conference in Washington, D.C., offers the following nine resources. Call 1-800-235-8722 or fax 202-722-8709.

- *Putting Children and Families First: A Challenge for Our Church, Nation, and World.* A resource developed by committees on domestic social policy, international policy, and marriage and family life examines the needs of all children in an increasingly difficult world. Presents the moral and religious dimensions of caring for children.
- *A Catholic Campaign for Children: Parish Resource Manual.* In addition to the statement, *Putting Children and Families First*, this comprehensive resource includes practical planning and support materials, clip art, bulletin quotes, liturgical and preaching guides and models to help parishes integrate a focus on children and families into all aspects of parish life. A video is also available. Also in Spanish.
- *Let the Children Come to Me: A Statement on Early Childhood Care and Education.*
- "I Am Only a Child." A compelling video reflection on the situation of children in our nation and world.
- *Families: Black and Catholic, Catholic and Black.* Captures the vitality of the African American Catholic community through its poetry, music, and recounting stories and examples of family activities.
- *Parenthood.* Examines both the beauty and the challenge of parenthood and considers factors involved in making responsible decisions regarding childbearing and children. From the U.S. Bishop's Committee for Pastoral Research and Practices.
- *Political Responsibility—Proclaiming the Gospel of Life, Protecting the Least Among Us, and Pursuing the Common Good.* Discusses the individual Catholic's role as a responsible citizen and voter. This document includes the church's position on issues such as family life, the environment, immigration, and the mass media. A summary brochure and video are also available.
- *Renewing the Vision—A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry.* This 20th anniversary document responds to the new challenges and opportunities of youth ministry today. Addresses the call to personal discipleship, evangelization, and leadership.
- *Letter of the Pope to Children in the Year of the Family.* Apostolic letter from Pope John Paul II written to children to mark the end of the 1994 International Year of the Family.

Raising Kids Who Care About Themselves, About Their World, and About Each Other. By Kathleen O'Connell Chesto. Offers parents and child care providers guidelines for fostering ethics at an early age. Deals with issues of rivalry and sharing, empathy for others, motivation that sticks, lying, bullying, and peer pressure. Call the Catholic Reporter Publishing Company, Sheed & Ward, 1-800-333-7373 or fax 816-968-2292.

Jewish Resources

The American Scene, the quarterly public policy newsletter of Hadassah. 212-303-8136.

The following four resources are available from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, 2027 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036 or by calling 202-387-2800.

- "Ani V'Atah: How to Do Social Justice Programming." A video exploring how to develop successful social justice activities in your congregation, including coalition-building and advocacy.
- *Mitzvah Day Manual*. Mitzvah Day is a program that sets aside one day during the year when all congregants take part in one of several social action projects in their local community. This manual, compiled from congregations of all sizes that have conducted successful mitzvah days, includes tips on organizing your committee, bulletins, fliers, logos, budget, complete action plan, selecting projects, and prayer services.
- *Social Action Manual: A Practical Guide for Organizing and Programming Social Action in the Synagogue* by Rabbi David Saperstein. A complete guide for congregations with descriptions of resources and social action organizations. Published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism.
- Public Education Shabbat resources.

The following two resources are available from Women of Reform Judaism 838 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10021, call 212- 650-4051; fax 212-650-4059; or e-mail wrj@uahc.org.

- *Guidelines for Sisterhood Critical Issues Action*. This updated and comprehensive guide covers the information and steps needed for effective action on the federal, state, provincial, and local levels.
- *In Pursuit of Justice: Resolutions and Policy Statements*. A fundamental resource that includes resolutions and policy statements on critical issues and religious living adopted by Women of Reform Judaism assemblies, boards of directors and executive committees since 1915. A full subject index and a chronological listing of resolutions are provided for ease of use.

To obtain the following two resources, contact the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Press Order Dept., 838 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10021-7064, 1-888-489-8242.

- *The NFTY Tikkun Olam Program*. The North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) is the youth group of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. NFTY's Tikkun Olam program provides a set of guidelines to help lead your youth group in creating a well-rounded calendar, incorporating different types of social, educational, and action-based programs.
- *Tough Choices: Jewish Perspectives on Social Justice*, by Albert Vorspan and David Saperstein. Confronts social justice dilemmas and the hard, cutting-edge issues of our time, guided by Jewish sources and texts. Has extensive material on economic justice issues.

To obtain the following four resources, contact the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Rapaport House, 155 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010, 212-533-7800, or visit www.uscj.org nfty on the Web.

- *Judaism and Child Welfare*. A packet concerned with the treatment of all children. Contains recent data on children and a listing of Jewish educational materials published by the United Synagogue Commission on Social Action and Public Policy.
- Tikkun Olam publications also include a series of pamphlets on social action issues, including "116 Practical Mitzvah Suggestions" by Danny Siegel (Youth Dept., phone ext. 2319).
- "Resolutions." A pamphlet containing positions on Conservative movement issues, topics of Jewish concern, and public policy matters adopted by the United Synagogue at its 1995 biennial convention. (Department of Special Projects, phone ext. 2618).
- *Shabbat Shalom*. A family guide to help parents and young children (Preschool–Grade 4) celebrate Shabbat together on Friday night (Education Dept., phone ext. 2507).

No Kidding Around! America's Young Activists Are Changing Our World by Wendy Schaetzel Lesko. More examples of young people's involvement in policy making. Contact: Information USA, PO Box E, Kensington, MD 20895, 301-942-6303.

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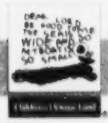

From CDF

On-Line Resources

- CDF Web site: www.childrensdefense.org
- Children's Sabbaths e-mail: cdfsabbaths@childrensdefense.org
- Free CDF computer listserv subscriptions

Contact CDF Web site—www.childrensdefense.org—to learn how you can subscribe to the following listservs: Child Care Advocacy E-Mail Network; Child Health Information Project; Legislative Update; Student Leadership Network for Children; and CDF Web Site Alert.

The following can be ordered from CDF Fulfillment, 202-662-3652.

General Resources

State of America's Children Yearbook 1999. An annual analysis of the status of children includes new statistics on child care and development, child poverty and family income, as well as analyses of maternal and child health, education, violence against and by children, child abuse and neglect, and adolescent pregnancy prevention and youth development. Each section offers valuable statistics, as well as descriptions of model programs and analyses of important federal- and state-level trends. Issued annually in March.

CDF Reports. CDF's newsletter is a one-of-a-kind monthly report that brings you in-depth news and information from Washington and around the country on the people and events shaping children's lives. Child care is a major focus in 1999. Subscriptions and back issues available.

Faith-Based Resources

Children's Sabbath Video: "National Observance of Children's Sabbaths: Raising Voices, Linking Hands for Children." This 9-minute video features highlights from past events, as well as interviews with a variety of religious leaders. Inspires communities of faith to participate in the Children's Sabbaths and strengthen service and advocacy efforts for children.

Bible with Child Advocates' Concordance. For faithful advocates, CDF presents a New Revised Standard Version Bible with a topical child advocates' concordance. This handsomely bound Bible in genuine leather contains a special concordance with selected verses on parents, children, social justice, and other child-related topics. Pocket-sized, it measures 4 1/2" x 6 1/2".

"A Prayer for Children." This moving poem by Ina Hughs is read by CDF President Marian Wright Edelman, with footage of children. A very powerful motivational video! 5 min.

Guide My Feet: Prayers and Meditations on Loving and Working for Children by Marian Wright Edelman. Personal reflections on the joys, struggles, and rituals of parenting and working for children. Provides resources for public worship as well as private devotion. Beacon Press, 1995.

Welcome the Child: A Child Advocacy Guide for Churches by Shannon P. Daley and Kathleen Guy. This guide for clergy, staff, and everyone involved in children's ministries provides practical information for involving the congregation in child advocacy. From CDF and Friendship Press, 1994.

"Welcoming the Children." This video shows how local congregations respond to urgent needs of children by using their own resources and forming partnerships with other groups. Ideal for use by a single congregation or multiple congregations to plan strategies for helping children. From CDF and Friendship Press, 1994.

Prophetic Voices: Black Preachers Speak on Behalf of Children. A unique collection of sermons by 21 preachers representing 13 denominations. These sermons affirm the value of children and remind adults of their moral obligations to help and nurture all children. Foreword by Renita J. Weems; opening letter by CDF President Marian Wright Edelman. 1993.

Videos from the "Great Preachers Series" of CDF's annual Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry. This series includes: Dr. David Hornbeck, Rev. Dr. James Forbes, Rev. Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor, Dr. Vashti McKenzie, Dr. Gardner Taylor, Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Dr. John Maguire, Dr. Renita Weems, and others.

Black Community Crusade for Children

Summer Freedom School and After-School Curriculum Guides. These valuable guides offer an activity-based curriculum that, along with the superb book list, give children positive images and role models, a sense of their own history and culture, and experiences to discover and develop their individual identities and talents.

Summer Freedom School Curriculum Guide
After-School Freedom School Curriculum Guide
Summer Freedom School Curriculum Guide with Hispanic Supplement
Summer Freedom School and After-School Book List
Summer Freedom School, After-School and Hispanic Book List

Child Care Resources

Child Care Challenges. The latest data on child care costs and other indicators are provided in individual state profiles. A valuable resource for every child care advocate!

Child Care NOW! Organizer's Kit. Provides helpful information and practical suggestions for how you can get involved in the 1999 Child Care NOW! campaign in order to get the message to Congress that America's families need quality child care they can afford.

Locked Doors: States Struggling to Meet the Child Care Needs of Low-Income Working Families. This 1998 report profiles the urgent need for additional investments in child care by assessing data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Key Facts about Child Care and Early Education: A Briefing Book. This 1997 edition provides basic facts about child care, Head Start, and early education, with state-specific information.

Helping Parents Work and Children Succeed: A Guide to Child Care and the 1996 Welfare Act. A detailed description of child care provisions in the 1996 welfare law and key implementation issues.

Working Together for Children: Head Start and Child Care Partnerships. How Head Start and child care programs can work together to improve care for children.

Issue Brief: The High Cost of Child Care Puts Quality Care Out of Reach for Many Families. Provides data on the cost of child care across the nation and demonstrates the difficulties many families face in affording high-quality care. The report includes data on child care costs for infants, preschool and school-age children, costs in child care centers and family child care homes, and costs in urban and rural areas throughout the U.S.

State Child Care and Early Education Developments: Highlights and Updates for 1998. Provides highlights and updates regarding state actions on child care and early education issues during 1998. The report examines changes in funding, eligibility, payment rates, quality initiatives, licensing, prekindergarten and State Head start programs, and more.

First Steps, Promising Futures: State Prekindergarten Initiatives. Includes an overview of the scope and approaches of state prekindergarten initiatives as of 1998, as well as information on state policies that promote quality in and access to state prekindergarten initiatives and information on building a comprehensive system for early childhood care and education.

Child Health Resources

Materials to get the word out about the Children's Health Insurance Program:

- *Child Health Outreach and Enrollment Toolkit*
- *Sign Them Up!* brochure
- *Child Health* posters
- www.childrensdefense.org signup

Start a Children's Movement In Your Community

Stand For Children
1834 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: 1-800-663-4032 or 202-234-0095
Fax: 202-234-0217
E-mail: tellstand@stand.org
Web site: www.stand.org

- Begun in 1996, Stand For Children is a non-partisan, membership organization affiliated with CDF that helps grassroots children's activists build chapters that improve the lives of children in their communities through successful policy change, awareness-raising, and service initiatives. To obtain information on forming a chapter, visit the Stand Web site or call Stand. June 1 is Stand For Children Day all across America!

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Use of items in *Prayers of the People* was inspired by Crenshaw United Methodist Church, Blackstone, Virginia.

1999 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths

Evaluation Form

Let us know how you celebrated the Children's Sabbath!

Please detach and return this evaluation form to: The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths
25 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

About You and Your Congregation

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Congregation (if not part of address) and Religious Affiliation:

Telephone (indicate day or evening) Fax

Web site Email

Please describe your congregation: its membership (number, racial/ethnic makeup, number of children, and so forth), and location (urban, suburban, rural)

Is this the first time your congregation has celebrated a Children's Sabbath? **Yes** **No**
If not, in which years (1992-1999) has your congregation participated?

About Your Children's Sabbath

Who took the lead in proposing and planning the Children's Sabbath in your congregation?
(Please describe their role, e.g., senior pastor, lay person, committee member, youth group leader)
How many other people helped significantly in the planning?

How did your congregation observe the Children's Sabbath? What activities, service, or events were held, and approximately how many persons participated in each?
Please underline all that apply to your celebration.

1. Focused the worship service, liturgy, or prayer service on children through sermon, prayers, music, or other.
   Was it for a single congregation, ecumenical group (different Christian congregations), or interfaith (Christians, Jews, Muslims, and members of other faith groups)?
2. Involved children and youths more fully in the service.
3. Led educational programs focused on children's concerns for preschool, elementary, middle school, high school, adult classes.
4. Held special outreach and advocacy activities.

Briefly describe any or all of these events *(use additional paper if necessary).* Please feel free to enclose any bulletins or other materials from your Children's Sabbath. We love to see what you did!

What follow-up is planned? That is, how will your congregation incorporate the commitment to children generated by your Children's Sabbath into the ongoing life of your congregation this year? Please be specific.

What support would you like from CDF for your follow-up efforts or your involvement in the Children's Sabbath next year?

Did any other congregations in your community hold Children's Sabbaths? Tell us about them, if possible.

About the Children's Sabbath Manual

Please rate the Children's Sabbath Manual sections.

1. Very useful **2.** Somewhat useful **3.** Not very useful **4.** Didn't use **5.** Plan to use at later date

____ Section 1	____ Section 3	____ Section 5	____ Section 7
____ Section 2	____ Section 4	____ Section 6	____ Section 8

What resources or changes would you like to see in the Children's Sabbath manual?

About Spreading the Word

How did you learn about the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths?

1. Denomination/Faith Group
2. Religious organization or community group (specify which)
3. CDF (publication, mailing, meeting, internet web site, Children's Sabbath video, other)
4. Media coverage (please specify)
5. Other

How did you publicize your Children's Sabbath events? (Underline all that apply)

1. Print coverage (name and date of publication; send clipping if possible)
   Community newspaper
   Denominational newspaper/Faith Group Newspaper
   Congregational newsletter or bulletin
   Other
2. Broadcast coverage (name of television/radio station)
3. Other
4. Did not actively publicize the Children's Sabbath

What individuals do you know or what professional networks are you a part of that might be interested in receiving material on the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths?

Name

Organization | Denomination/Affiliation

Address

City | State | Zip

Telephone | Fax

Website | E-Mail

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

NATIONAL OBSERVANCE OF CHILDREN'S SABBATHS

Children's Defense Fund

Leave No Child Behind®

ORDER FORM

Wonderfully Made:
Preparing Children to Learn and Succeed
October 15-17, 1999

The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths unites thousands of religious congregations and organizations in speaking out and acting faithfully on behalf of children and families. This year's National Observance of Children's Sabbaths focuses on early childhood development and the essentials that children need in order to achieve their full potential.

CHILDREN'S SABBATH MULTIFAITH MANUAL

Learn how to plan and promote your Children's Sabbath with this easy-to-use, single-volume manual. Includes practical activities for adults and children, worship services for Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and other faith traditions, lesson plans, and resources for follow-up activities within every faith community.

Multifaith Manual Pricing Information

Quantity	Price (for each)
1-4	$6
5-9	$5
10-19	$4
20-29	$3
30-49	$2.50
50-99	$2
100 or more	$1.50

CHILDREN'S SABBATHS VIDEO

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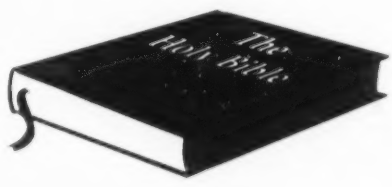

CDF Reports

CDF's monthly newsletter provides an in-depth look at how congregations across the country are preparing for the upcoming National Observance of Children's Sabbaths. Includes tips on making a long-term difference in children's lives and advice on organizing Children's Sabbaths. June Special Report: $2.50.
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2000 Wall Calendar

CDF's wall calendar is a year-long celebration of children containing beautiful pictures from gifted photographer Peggy Peattie. Each month features a different community-based organization dedicated to serving children's needs. The large format features plenty of space for noting appointments. And for the first time, each month's display includes inspiring quotes about children! Opens to 12" x 26". $12.95.

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